

THE LONDON READER

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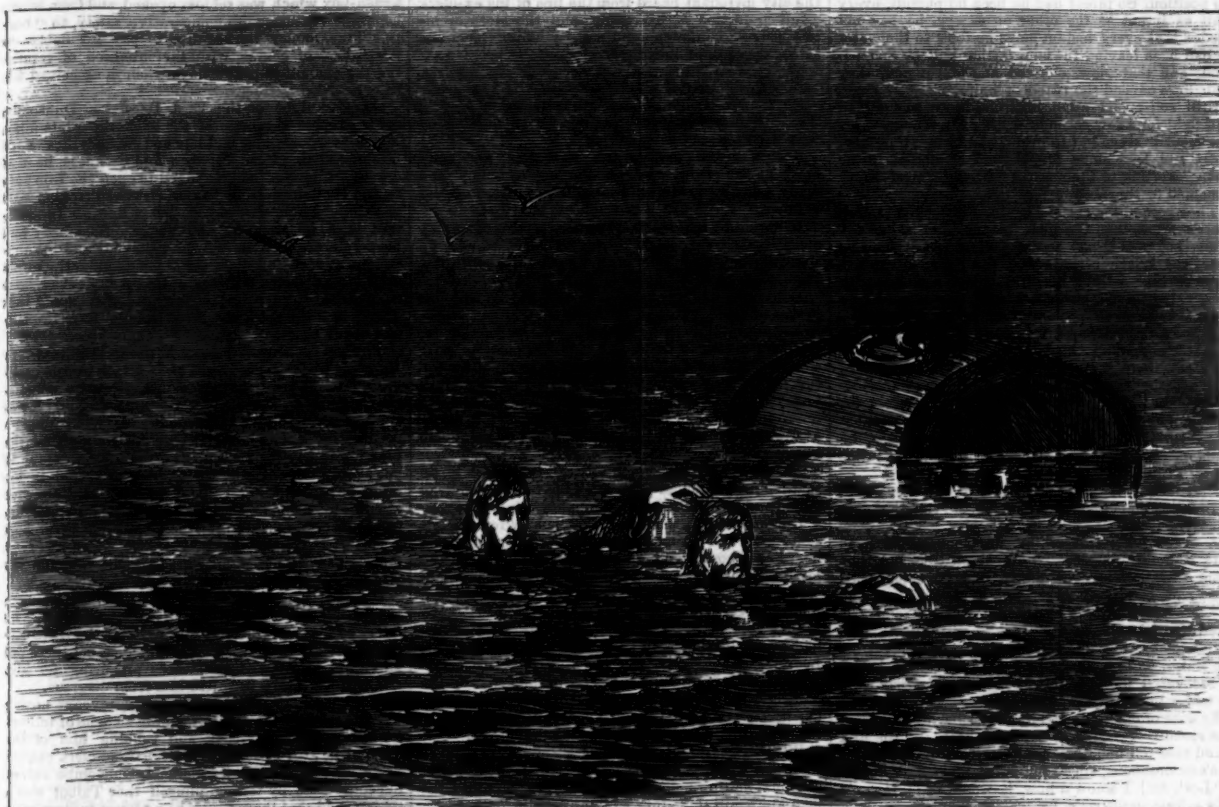
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[CAUGHT AT LAST.]

FAULT ON BOTH SIDES.

A Christmas Story.

CHAPTER X.

As two spent swimmers that do cling together
And choke their art. *Macbeth.*

CHARLES HARCOURT saw Duncombe crossing the wharf, and it was with the greatest difficulty he restrained himself from springing forward and seizing him with his own hands, so much did he fear that the detective might suffer him to slip.

In his own excited eagerness he could make no allowance for the coolness of the man who had reduced chief-catching to an art, and was wont to boast that when allowed entirely his own way in such business no one had ever yet escaped him.

Duncombe, unconscious of the proximity of danger, made his way towards the tug, which lay puffing, fuming, panting, and blowing off steam at the landing-stage, waiting to take off the last load of passengers and luggage to the "Grand Duke."

He was not encumbered with much luggage.

In his hand he carried a black leather travelling bag, while a boy followed him with a small portmanteau.

The detective sauntered carelessly towards him.

"Going by the 'Grand Duke,' sir?" he asked.

"What business is that of yours?" Duncombe replied, angrily, endeavouring to push by him.

"Come, come, Mr. Duncombe, it won't do; I know you," said the detective.

Harcourt's clerk, at being thus addressed by name, turned an ashy gray colour, and looked round as if contemplating flight; but if he had formed any such intention he altered it the next instant, and with a sickly smile upon his face he made reply:

"You are labouring under some strange mistake. My name is Lambert. Allow me to pass."

Again he endeavoured to push by, and Harcourt, from his place of concealment, imagined that the

detective was positively deceived by the assertion that the man before him was not Duncombe but Lambert, and would suffer him to escape. Forgetting the strict injunctions he had received not to show himself till the capture had been effected, the city merchant sprang out from the shadow of the crane, and cried, in an excited manner, totally foreign to his usual calm and staid deportment:

"That's the man, that's Duncombe! Arrest him! I give him in charge, I give him in charge!"

Duncombe staggered back on finding himself thus confronted by his late employer, but before the detective could lay hands upon him he darted across the wharf with wonderful rapidity, and without hesitating for a moment, plunged head first into the river.

"There, Mr. Harcourt," said the police officer; "what did I tell you? One of the quietest and neatest captures clean spoilt. It's a pity you unprofessional gents don't leave thief-catching to them as understands it."

But Harcourt did not hear the speech. He was after Duncombe in a moment—after him across the wharf—after him into the river.

The tide was running out fast, the fog still hung over the water, and in the dull gray light of early morning objects could scarcely be distinguished at the distance of a few yards.

Loungers, loafers, passengers and the porters crowded together on the edge of the wharf at the spot where the two men had leapt into the stream. Lanterns were swung low down near the surface of the water, and everybody shouted and screamed, but nothing was seen, nothing was heard of either Harcourt or Duncombe.

"Man overboard! Boat, boat!" the crowd cried in chorus. But the detective did not waste his breath; he ran down the steps by the landing-stage and jumped into the first empty boat he saw, seized a pair of sculls, and was paddling down the stream while the crowd were still shouting and waving their lanterns, as if noise and light could pull two men out of the river.

Both Duncombe and Harcourt were good swimmers. The former, trusting to his skill, hoped to be able to make a landing a little farther down, and escape into the back streets of the town before the pursuit grew too hot, but he had not calculated on having any one so close upon his heels as Harcourt was; besides, swimming in heavy winter clothing is a very different matter to swimming in the usual light costume worn in the water, and so both the pursuer and the pursued found.

When Harcourt came to the surface after his plunge he saw Duncombe only a few yards in advance of him, and he strained every muscle to overtake him; but Duncombe was swimming for liberty, and the knowledge goaded him to almost superhuman exertions.

In silence these two men swam through the thick, murky water of the Mersey, but Harcourt was stronger and in better condition than the other, and gained upon him at every stroke.

The shouts that had at first sounded in their ears were no longer audible, the lights which had flashed upon the bank were no longer visible; nothing was to be seen but the pea-soup-coloured water and the pea-soup-coloured fog. The two men had, without noticing it in their eager excitement, been carried out into mid-stream.

With clothes saturated, and boots heavy with water, it was impossible that either could hold out much longer.

Duncombe was the first to give in. He relaxed his exertions and looked round; then his appalling position was for the first time made evident to him.

To reach the shore was impossible. No boat was visible; nothing but fog and water on every side met his gaze. Every stroke he made was but to prolong his suffering, for death seemed inevitable.

The next moment Harcourt was within a length of him, and even in the agony of anticipated death a gleam of fiendish satisfaction shot through Duncombe's frame at the thought that, at all events, his pursuer would share his fate. Who that pursuer was as yet he knew not.

"Surrender," said Harcourt, clutching him by the collar.

Duncombe recognised his voice.

"I'll surrender to death," he gasped, "but not to you. We both must drown, and you shall be the first."

Then he grappled with him in the river, and the two sank down beneath the surface, with the water hissing and bubbling in their ears, each struggling to free himself from the other's hold.

Not until Duncombe spoke had Harcourt realised his position. So intent had he been on pursuit, every whit as intent as the other on escape, he had not heeded that every instant since he took to the water he had been leaving the land farther and farther behind, and that now, clogged and exhausted, they both were beyond the reach of help.

Still self-preservation is strong in all, and a man will fight for a few seconds of life even though those few seconds serve but to prolong suffering, thus Harcourt and Duncombe fought and struggled in the water, exerting to their utmost what little strength remained to them.

They rose to the surface again, still locked in each other's arms, then the next instant down they sank again, but in that one moment Harcourt fancied he heard the splash of oars and the sound of voices. Hope revived within his breast and lent him new energy, but he felt his senses deserting him, and he knew that he could prolong the conflict no longer.

A second time they rose to the surface, and this time it was amongst boats.

"Help! help!" Harcourt gasped, faintly.

Duncombe saw the boats, and knew that while they meant life and happiness for his adversary, for him they meant a felon's cell, and, actuated even at that thrilling moment by the cruellest revenge, he made one final effort to thrust Harcourt a third time beneath the water.

Harcourt, incapable of further resistance, would have fallen an easy victim but for the timely aid of some one in a boat.

A boat-hook fell crashing on Duncombe's head with stunning violence. His hold released, but Harcourt was powerless to assist himself even when freed from the other's grasp, and he would have sunk had not a strong hand seized him and a strong arm lifted him into the boat.

Duncombe, too, was saved—drawn roughly from the water, and laid upon the boards senseless. When he recovered the handcuffs were on his wrists, and he was a prisoner.

By dint of chafins and brandy Charles Harcourt was speedily restored to consciousness, and the first sound that fell upon his ears was that of the detective's monotonous, sing-song voice.

"Lor', air! I know'd how it would be! If you'd only a kept quiet we'd ha' had this fellow in quod, and you enjoying your breakfast at the Adelphi before this; but you would go and meddle in things you didn't understand, and look at the consequences—you was as near being food for the fishes as ever I see any one."

"Have you got him—Duncombe?"

"Yes, yes, we've got him right enough, but it ain't the genteel and gentlemanly way o' takin' a man! Tain't my way of doing business," and the detective spoke in the tones of a man sorely annoyed.

Before they reached the shore Harcourt fainted. The shock—the excitement and the fatigue—had been terrible, and for some hours it was doubtful whether his system would recover, but he was a strong man, and under judicious treatment he revived sufficiently to return to town later in the day.

Duncombe sat in moody silence, his manacled hands clasped before him, until they reached the shore, and suffered himself to be led away without a word.

It was not until the police officer put him into the train to take him back to London that he spoke.

Then he said, with a sort of bravado air:

"It's all up with me—I suppose I'm safe to hang for it?"

"You just take care what you say," answered the detective, "or you'll make a mess of it. Who said anything about hanging?"

"What do you want me for?"

"Forgery."

"Is that all?" asked Duncombe; and he gave a sigh of relief.

"Yes—and quite enough, too, as you'll find out. There ain't nobody dead, so don't you go and commit yourself."

"Not dead! Thank Heaven for that!" said the clerk, fervently; then he added, after a moment's pause, "I never meant to kill him—never!"

He neither opened his lips again throughout the journey, nor spoke, nor offered the least resistance when they took him to the police-station and locked him up.

At the examination before the sitting magistrates the following morning he preserved the same silence. "The prisoner was understood to say that he resented his defence"—so the newspaper reports put it—"and was removed to Newgate in the course of the afternoon to await his trial."

Later in the day Duncombe opened his lips, and begged as a great favour that a communication might be immediately despatched to Charles Harcourt, begging him to come to the prison. The message was sent and Harcourt came, and there, in the stone cell, the city merchant heard from the lips of his ex-clerk a full confession of his crime, and the story of his misdeeds—a confession and a story which form the substance of the following chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

Confess yourself to Heaven!

Repent what's past.

Hamlet.

It all arose out of gambling.

Such was Duncombe's first statement, and such has been the pitiful confession made by many and many a one doomed to life-long incarceration or the galleys.

It would be tedious to give the wretched man's story in his own words, interspersed as it was by the questions and remarks of Charles Harcourt, but the substance of it was as follows.

Duncombe had a cousin—a merry, gay young fellow, connected with one of the great training establishments in the north; and this cousin, on the occasion of a visit to London, had talked much to Harcourt's head clerk of the fortunes to be made on the turf, and had "put him on to a certainty"—that is to say, he had told him that Boreas was sure to win a certain race, and had besought him to put every available farthing he had in the world on the horse in question.

But Duncombe was much too careful a man to do that; however, under persuasion he risked a couple of pounds, and in eight-and-forty hours won twenty.

Duncombe was a man who loved money for money's sake. He had no extravaganzas, but he longed to hoard and hoard, and put penny on penny for the mere sake of possessing the coin. It took him half a year to save twenty pounds out of his salary, and here, in two days, without trouble, he had made the same sum, and might have made ten times as much had he not been afraid of risking more from his little hoard.

Duncombe applied to his cousin immediately for more "tips," and for some months fortune lavished her favours on him. He lost, of course, at times, but his winnings were far greater than his losses.

With success the passion of gaming grew upon him, and he became mixed up with a gang of professional betting men and card-players, of whom the man known in this story as "the captain" was chief. These wary rogues and sharpers lived on such fools as Duncombe. Night after night he met them, played with them, betted with them—night after night he lost—and night after night he returned to them with the gambler's infatuation—in the belief that by one lucky coup he might recover everything.

Sharp and shrewd as he was in the city, Duncombe was no match for these men, who robbed him systematically under the name of "play."

He lost all his previous winnings, lost all the little hoard he had treasured together while in Harcourt's service, and more, for he had given his notes of hand for various amounts, to be paid as his quarterly salary became due, so that all his money was anticipated; yet, whenever he found himself in possession of a sovereign he risked it and lost it as before, for the demon of gambling was upon him, and he was powerless to resist his allurements.

While Duncombe had money to play with and pay with, the captain and his associates had been his very dear friends, but when the day came—and it was not very long in coming—when he was compelled to ask for grace and for time to meet his gaming debts it was scant mercy and small pity he met with at their hands.

When he came to calculate the money he owed the magnitude of the sum filled him with alarm, but it was useless to say he could not pay, for they held over him the terrible threat of applying to Mr. Harcourt, which no one knew better than himself was a proceeding certain to ensure his instant dismissal, for the monarch of St. Styliotes' Yard was a stern man and a rigid one—who set his face mercilessly against gaming, and would never employ even in the humblest capacity any one suspected of betting or gambling.

Holding this threat over him, the gang of rogues succeeded in extorting from Duncombe every farthing of which he became possessed; even then their rapacity was not satisfied, and they cried for more.

Duncombe must find money or all his gaming transactions would be laid bare to his employer. It mattered nothing to them where or how he found it.

He might beg, borrow, or steal; that was nothing to them so long as certain sums owing to themselves were paid. If he had not got the money he must get it—that was his look-out.

So they spoke to him, coupling these words with oaths and menaces, and Duncombe, driven to despair, knew not how to raise the money to save him from ruin and disgrace.

It was the night before the commencement of this story that the evil one called to Duncombe's remembrance the cash-box, kept upstairs in the iron safe—a cash-box which was seldom opened, and from which he might venture, with comparative safety, to "borrow" the money he required to pay his debts—to "borrow," of course, with the intention of returning the amount in a few days when he received his salary.

On the night of the 23rd December Duncombe made excuses to remain at the office till a late hour. When every one else had left and St. Styliotes' Yard was buried in gloom, silence and darkness, he had crept upstairs and had managed to open the iron safe to find that after all his labour, risk and trouble were in vain. There was no cash-box there. In impotent rage he stamped and swore. Somebody had been beforehand with him, he believed, and his suspicions at once fell upon Gerald Talbot. He never for a single moment doubted that a theft had been committed, neither did he for a moment doubt that Talbot was the thief, and he cursed him from the bottom of his heart.

The reader already knows how on Christmas Eve Harcourt himself discovered the absence of the cash-box; how he accused Talbot of stealing it, and discharged him in consequence. This discovery was another severe blow to Duncombe, who had planned a scheme by which he might obtain enough of the plunder to pay his most pressing gambling debts and yet avoid the danger of theft. He arranged in his mind, never doubting Talbot's crimes, to tax him with having stolen the cash-box, and obtain a certain sum from him to purchase his silence. But when Harcourt discharged Gerald from his service Duncombe's silence became no longer worth purchasing, and the wretched man was driven to despair.

Olinging yet to the straw of hope of obtaining a portion of the booty from the discharged clerk, he followed him and induced him to enter the little eating-house in the city, but Talbot's conduct there put an end to all hope of fair words procuring for him the sum necessary to shield him from disgrace.

Then it was, with the passion of revenge urging him on, that Duncombe formed the scheme of following Talbot on horseback and robbing him of the plunder he still believed the discharged clerk carried about his person. Easily planned, Duncombe saved his conscience by telling himself that Talbot was a robber, and that there could be no harm in depriving a thief of the proceeds of his dishonesty. Still some qualms of feeling made him hesitate, but his encounter with the "captain" on Ludgate Hill decided him, and he followed Talbot along the Riversham road, but, owing to the delay of his visit to Harcourt at Cardross, did not overtake him till he was within a couple of miles of his destination.

On the lonely heath in the dark December night Duncombe overtook Gerald Talbot plodding on his sad and weary way. He dismounted from his horse after he had passed the unsuspecting youth, and, armed with a thick stick, awaited his approach.

From the deep black shadow he sprang out, and, in an assumed voice, demanded Gerald's money. Talbot was taken by surprise, but immediately closed with his assailant, and then a most terrible struggle ensued. Duncombe was a desperate man—Talbot was a resolute one. Locked in each other's arms they staggered backwards and forwards in the road, now one obtaining the mastery, and now another. In silence and in darkness they fought together, till Talbot caught his foot in the treacherous root of a tree and fell backwards.

As he fell, Duncombe raised the bludgeon he carried and smote him a violent blow on his fair, white forehead.

One low, stifled groan, and he fell to the ground, lying there to all appearance dead. Duncombe, in an agony of fear at what he had done, knelt by his side, felt for his pulse, and listened for the beatings of his heart; but the lad the moment before so full of life and strength lay there pale, motionless, inanimate, and breathless.

Duncombe believed that he had killed him, and it was some time before he could summon up courage to touch the contents of the pockets of his victim; but by repeated applications to a brandy flask he nerved himself—shuddering the while—to the horrid job.

He felt in Talbot's pockets, nay, he turned them inside out, and beyond a few shillings—less than a sovereign—he found nothing.

The agony of fear at discovering the magnitude of

his crime when he thought he had slain Talbot gave way to the rage of despair on finding how fruitless had been his wickedness. He believed himself to be a murderer and a robber, yet he had not obtained the money that was to save him from disgrace and ruin. Remorse for his crime coupled with fury at its want of success almost drove him mad.

How he got back to London he hardly knew; all that he remembered was that, muddled and splashed from head to foot, he rode into the big city, on a tired, jaded horse, when the bells were ringing merrily in honour of the Christmas morn, and that the neatly dressed women and clean-shaven men he encountered gazed at him in wonder and bewilderment, as if he were a lunatic escaped from Bedlam.

In the back room of a wretched London lodging-house he passed his Christmas Day, forcing his fingers into his ears to shut out the maddening sound of the eternally jingling bells, and shutting his eyes to avoid the horrid sight ever present before them of the upturned face of Gerald Talbot, as it lay with the crimson gash upon its white forehead, and its fair hair matted and clogged with blood.

With delight he hailed the hour the following morning at which he customarily set forth for St. Stylites' Yard. Anything that promised distraction from his own thoughts was a happy relief, yet he hardly dared venture into the streets, for it seemed to him that all who looked at him might read the brand of Cain upon his brow, and that every person he met knew that he was a murderer.

He fancied a policeman followed him, and, with the perspiration standing on his brow, he made a long detour to avoid him. Never had the newsboys seemed so pertinacious in forcing their papers upon him as they did that special morning—papers he longed to see, yet dared not look at, for fear of his eyes resting on some such heading as "Brutal Murder near Riversham!" or, "Shocking Tragedy in Kent!"

When he reached St. Stylites' Yard he encountered Charles Harcourt, and shortly afterwards heard from him of the letter he had received from the landlord of the "Jolly Magpie." Then it was the idea occurred to him of endeavouring to turn the crime upon the city merchant, and then it was that the thought occurred to him of obtaining money from Harcourt as the price of his silence.

The reader already knows how Harcourt, overwhelmed by the news, and doubting his own actions in the face of the discovery that the cash-box had never been stolen at all and that Talbot perforce was innocent of the crime for which he had been discharged, promised Duncombe a cheque, and how, before he had finished filling it in, he had started off for Riversham, urged by a sudden impulse to go to the scene of the tragedy and make further inquiries; the reader may also remember how the loud-voiced, half-intoxicated "captain" had come to St. Stylites' Yard to insist on receiving the promised money from Duncombe.

As a last resource, on the chance that before leaving his office Harcourt might have filled in the draft, Duncombe went into his employer's private room. There on the table lay the open cheque book, with the cheque partly written. There was his name—"Pay Mr. Duncombe, or bearer"—the name again in the merchant's hand, but that was all; no amount and no signature.

The temptation was strong. He knew he could imitate his employer's signature; he had gone too far to have any conscientious scruples remaining, and, on the impulse of the moment, he sat down and took the pen in hand.

His first thought had been simply to forge a cheque for a sufficient amount to meet the demand of his noisy and pressing creditor, but then, was it not as easy to draw out the cheque for a thousand pounds as for ten?

The knowledge that he must sooner or later be discovered urged him on, and he filled in the cheque for fifteen hundred pounds, trusting to his being so well known at the bank to obtain the sum without question.

So far his crime prospered. The forgery was cleverly done. Harcourt's balance was a large one, and the money, in small notes and gold, was paid to him; and, long before his employer knew of the forgery he was on his way to Liverpool with its proceeds. There he instituted inquiries as to when the next ship would sail for America. He found the "Grand Duke" would leave in the course of a few hours, and at once took his passage.

No suspicion of immediate pursuit entered his mind, it did not appear to him to be possible that Harcourt could discover the forgery till the next morning, and by that time he would be tossing on the wide ocean miles away from England.

How Harcourt came to discover the theft sooner than Duncombe expected, and how he followed in pursuit have been already detailed, as have been the

subsequent events which led to the wretched clerk's incarceration in Newgate, where he made to his former employer the confession the substance of which is embodied in this chapter.

His expressions of regret and contrition were many, and bore the semblance of being heartfelt and real, and Harcourt was more than half inclined to put faith in the promises of repentance made by the man, who, a few hours before, had tried his best to take his life. But Duncombe's case was out of the hands of any individual. He had been handed over to his country to be dealt with according to its laws; and perhaps it was more horror of the retribution that must come than of the crimes he had attempted and committed that called forth the confession and the abject prayers for the display of leniency.

Let us turn from this miserable wretch, leaving him to his well-deserved fate, and draw up the curtain on the final scene of this life drama of crime and virtue, of love and jealousy.

CHAPTER XII.

All friends shall taste
The wages of their virtue, and all foes
The cup of their deservings.

LEAR.

THE drawing-room at Cardross once more! The same room where the reader was first introduced to Mrs. Harcourt, seated on a low chair before the fire, with the red light glowing on her fair cheeks and golden hair, as she turned over the leaves of her photographic album.

Once more she is back in her home. The room is a blaze of light, jewels sparkle on her arms and round her neck, the self-same jewels she tore from her and flung at her husband's feet on Christmas Eve; but her eyes sparkle brighter than the diamonds as they turn upwards with fond affection to her husband, who, hanging over the back of her chair, whispers in her ear soft, gracious, lover-like words, welcoming her back to her home.

But they are not alone in the drawing-room of Cardross. On a couch drawn up near the fire, which blazes and sparkles brightly, as if infected by the general goodwill, lies Gerald Talbot, very pale, very handsome, and very interesting-looking, but suffering no evil from his wound that a few weeks' tender nursing and gentle solicitude will not heal—and surely he could not be in better hands!

His wife, Florence Harcourt's sister, sits on a stool by his side and holds his hand in hers, waiting to do his slightest bidding, to be his servant, his slave, to anticipate his slightest want, so overjoyed is she that good has come out of evil, that her husband is restored to her, and that the future looks as bright now as a week since it looked hopelessly gloomy.

"Can you forgive me, dearest?" asks Charles Harcourt of his wife.

For reply she looks into his face with eyes that speak love and happiness, but he is not satisfied.

"No, darling, tell me with your own lips that you will forgive and try to forget that terrible Christmas Day—tell me you will pardon me for my cruel, unjust suspicions—tell me you will pardon my hardness and coldness!"

"Then tell me, sir, that you will not make St. Stylites' Yard a rival to me any more, and that you will allow a wife's claims to your society to be at least equal to money-grubbing among a lot of musty, fusty old ledgers."

"I promise that willingly—now do you forgive me?"

"Oh, Charles, have you not something also to forgive? I tried to do my duty, but I failed. Can you forgive me for keeping Gerald's secret to myself? Can you forgive me my pettishness and pride, and—oh, can you forgive me that terrible suspicion I harboured of you when I thought that—that—"

He stopped her hesitating speech with a kiss.

"If I have anything to forgive, dearest, I do it freely, and would a thousand times over for the pleasure of seeing you here again, occupying your proper place by my fireside. But I have nothing to forgive. The fault was mine."

"Mine, too!"

"Well, Florence, a free pardon each way, and let us confess there was 'Fault on Both Sides.'"

It was the night of the 31st December, and as Charles Harcourt spoke these words the clocks round about struck twelve, and the bells from the neighbouring church-steeple struck up their gay and merry peal. As the listeners in the drawing-room of Cardross heard them not one but thought of the different feeling with which they had listened to their sound six days before, when to them all the world seemed weary and desolate.

Now all was bright and pleasant, and with eyes that sparkled, and with cheeks that glowed, the customary salutations were round.

"A Happy New Year!" Yes, away with the gloom and regrets of the past. Bury the year that has

died and welcome to the one that arises from its ashes. It is the new year that is to do everything for us—"Hope springs eternal in the human heart," but if the four people in Charles Harcourt's drawing-room were a little exhilarated with pleasure, surely there was reason for it, for never did new year dawn with brighter, happier prospects than on those who have played the chief parts in this story.

Pleasantly the merry bells sounded to them all, ushering in the new year—to all but one! What did he think of the new year as the sound of the bells came floating into his prison cell through the grated window? Ah, me! who shall say what sorrows are forgotten, what vows formed, what resolutions made, what evil deeds repented of, what good deeds planned, when the bells peal forth their merry welcome, and joyous voices chorus forth the pleasant greeting

"A HAPPY NEW YEAR."

THE END.

PROOF POSITIVE—OF WHAT?

"MONSTROUS depravity! Shameful! Now is not that a sight to discourage any Christian, particularly one that has laboured so hard as I have in the temperance cause?" said the worthy Silas Flint; and, pointing with his walking-stick, he directed his friend's attention to the opposite side of the street, there to see a boy of about fourteen years of age, miserably clad, proceeding with very irregular steps, sometimes nearing the curbstone, and then again going quite up to the shop windows, stopping quite still, and leaning against the buildings, as if for support.

"Is he intoxicated?" inquired Mr. Flint's friend.

"Why, certainly! Do you not see he has a bottle now, peeping from under his jacket? The young vagabond! The workhouse is the place for him!"

"He does not look as if he had been drinking. He is very pale, and, indeed, looks quite ill. Perhaps he is, and we are judging him wrongly. Let us speak to him, Flint. We can then find out. We may possibly be able to reform him."

"No, we are not judging him wrongly. That bottle is proof positive. It is no use to waste our time talking to him. Besides, it is near five o'clock, and I have to meet the Committee on Foreign Missions. If I had the time, I would find a policeman, and call his attention to him!"

The friends crossed the street just then, and came very close to the boy, who was gazing wistfully into a baker's window. He was very pale, with great mournful eyes, around which were dark circles. His thin lips were quite blue, and, indeed, his whole expression was one of great suffering. Silas Flint looked at him with a prejudiced eye and mind. He could see nothing but the bottle. His friend, however, was very doubtful as to the intoxication of the boy; and, seeing how wistfully he was gazing in at the bread, cakes, and so on, said:

"I do not believe it. He is ill, perhaps. I am going to take him in, and give him something, at any rate."

Just then the boy started off a few steps, reeled, and almost fell; but tightly he clutched his bottle. Several men came along just then, and one exclaimed:

"A young hopeful! Ain't he?"

The charitable feeling in the breast of Mr. Flint's friend received a check then. He could no longer doubt it was as Mr. Flint said. And that worthy gentleman went on his way.

Silas Flint was a good man in his way. If he saw any suffering he would relieve it, if he could; but he had little faith in anybody or anything. Well, perhaps we should be like him if we had had his experience. Mr. Flint was a bachelor of forty-five. Twenty years before he had loved and was engaged to a young girl who supported herself and aged mother by embroidering. The pay was not a living one. Late and early she toiled, until her young life was wearing fast away. Silas was poor then, working as a journeyman. His pay might have kept himself and wife, but the mother would be an encumbrance, an extra mouth to feed; so he dared not marry then. He could not trust to Providence for help. But he did trust in Mary. He had perfect faith in her love and constancy.

In the meantime, while Silas was waiting for the old mother to die, or his better days to come, somebody else came to see pretty Mary—one who had money enough to bring the invalid mother wine and delicacies—and so won her heart that she began with whinings and pleadings, and continued for many weeks wondering why Mary would not love and marry the kind young man.

Mary felt her strength growing daily less; and the dreadful thought came, what if she should grow ill? Who would care for her mother? So the poor girl yielded. And one day when Silas called to tell her some better luck he had at length found, his Mary was gone—"married," the neighbours told him.

"Surrender," said Harcourt, clutching him by the collar.

Duncombe recognised his voice.

"I'll surrender to death," he gasped, "but not to you. We both must drown, and you shall be the first."

Then he grappled with him in the river, and the two sank down beneath the surface, with the water hissing and bubbling in their ears, each struggling to free himself from the other's hold.

Not until Duncombe spoke had Harcourt realised his position. So intent had he been on pursuit, every whit as intent as the other on escape, he had not heeded that every instant since he took to the water he had been leaving the land farther and farther behind, and that now, clogged and exhausted, they both were beyond the reach of help.

Still self-preservation is strong in all, and a man will fight for a few seconds of life even though those few seconds serve but to prolong suffering, thus Harcourt and Duncombe fought and struggled in the water, exerting to their utmost what little strength remained to them.

They rose to the surface again, still locked in each other's arms, then the next instant down they sank again, but in that one moment Harcourt fancied he heard the splash of oars and the sound of voices. Hope revived within his breast and lent him new energy, but he felt his senses deserting him, and he knew that he could prolong the conflict no longer.

A second time they rose to the surface, and this time it was amongst boats.

"Help! help!" Harcourt gasped, faintly.

Duncombe saw the boats, and knew that while they meant life and happiness for his adversary, for him they meant a felon's cell, and, actuated even at that thrilling moment by the cruellest revenge, he made one final effort to thrust Harcourt a third time beneath the water.

Harcourt, incapable of further resistance, would have fallen an easy victim but for the timely aid of some one in a boat.

A boat-hook fell crashing on Duncombe's head with stunning violence. His hold released, but Harcourt was powerless to assist himself even when freed from the other's grasp, and he would have sunk had not a strong hand seized him and a strong arm lifted him into the boat.

Duncombe, too, was saved—drawn roughly from the water, and laid upon the boards senseless. When he recovered the handcuffs were on his wrists, and he was a prisoner.

By dint of chaffings and brandy Charles Harcourt was speedily restored to consciousness, and the first sound that fell upon his ears was that of the detective's monotonous, sing-song voice.

"Lor, sir! I know'd how it would be! If you'd only a kept quiet we'd ha' had this fellow in quod, and you enjoying your breakfast at the Adelphi before this; but you would go and meddle in things you didn't understand, and look at the consequences—you was as near being food for the fishes as ever I see any one."

"Have you got him—Duncombe?"

"Yes, yes, we've got him right enough, but it ain't the genteel and gentlemanly way o' takin' a man! 'Tain't my way of doing business," and the detective spoke in the tones of a man sorely annoyed.

Before they reached the shore Harcourt fainted. The shock—the excitement and the fatigue—had been terrible, and for some hours it was doubtful whether his system would recover, but he was a strong man, and under judicious treatment he revived sufficiently to return to town later in the day.

Duncombe sat in moody silence, his manacled hands clasped before him, until they reached the shore, and suffered himself to be led away without a word.

It was not until the police officer put him into the train to take him back to London that he spoke.

Then he said, with a sort of bravado air:

"It's all up with me—I suppose I'm safe to hang for it?"

"You just take care what you say," answered the detective, "or you'll make a mess of it. Who said anything about hanging?"

"What do you want me for?"

"Forgery."

"Is that all?" asked Duncombe; and he gave a sigh of relief.

"Yes—and quite enough, too, as you'll find out. There ain't nobody dead, so don't you go and commit yourself."

"Not dead! Thank Heaven for that!" said the clerk, fervently; then he added, after a moment's pause, "I never meant to kill him—never!"

He neither opened his lips again throughout the journey, nor spoke, nor offered the least resistance when they took him to the police-station and locked him up.

At the examination before the sitting magistrates the following morning he preserved the same silence. "The prisoner was understood to say that he reserved his defence"—so the newspaper reports put it—and was removed to Newgate in the course of the afternoon to await his trial.

Later in the day Duncombe opened his lips, and begged as a great favour that a communication might be immediately despatched to Charles Harcourt, begging him to come to the prison. The message was sent and Harcourt came, and there, in the stone cell, the city merchant heard from the lips of his ex-clerk a full confession of his crime, and the story of his misdeeds—a confession and a story which form the substance of the following chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

Confess yourself to Heaven!

Repent what's past.

Hamlet.

It all arose out of gambling.

Such was Duncombe's first statement, and such has been the pitiful confession made by many and many a one doomed to life-long incarceration or the gallows.

It would be tedious to give the wretched man's story in his own words, interspersed as it was by the questions and remarks of Charles Harcourt, but the substance of it was as follows.

Duncombe had a cousin—a merry, gay young fellow, connected with one of the great training establishments in the north; and this cousin, on the occasion of a visit to London, had talked much to Harcourt's head clerk of the fortunes to be made on the turf, and had "put him on to a certainty"—that is to say, he had told him that Boreas was sure to win a certain race, and had besought him to put every available farthing he had in the world on the horse in question.

But Duncombe was much too careful a man to do that; however, under persuasion he risked a couple of pounds, and in eight-and-forty hours won twenty.

Duncombe was a man who loved money for money's sake. He had no extravagancies, but he longed to hoard and hoard, and put penny on penny for the mere sake of possessing the coin. It took him half a year to save twenty pounds out of his salary, and here, in two days, without trouble, he had made the same sum, and might have made ten times as much had he not been afraid of risking more from his little hoard.

Duncombe applied to his cousin immediately for more "tips," and for some months fortune lavished her favours on him. He lost, of course, at times, but his winnings were far greater than his losses.

With success the passion of gaming grew upon him, and he became mixed up with a gang of professional betting men and card-players, of whom the man known in this story as "the captain" was chief. These wary rogues and sharpers lived on such fools as Duncombe. Night after night he met them, played with them, betted with them—night after night he lost—and night after night he returned to them with the gambler's infatuation—in the belief that by one lucky coup he might recover everything.

Sharp and shrewd as he was in the city, Duncombe was no match for these men, who robbed him systematically under the name of "play."

He lost all his previous winnings, lost all the little hoard he had treasured together while in Harcourt's service, and more, for he had given his notes of hand for various amounts, to be paid as his quarterly salary became due, so that all his money was anticipated; yet, whenever he found himself in possession of a sovereign he risked it and lost it as before, for the demon of gambling was upon him, and he was powerless to resist his allurements.

While Duncombe had money to play with and pay with, the captain and his associates had been his very dear friends, but when the day came—and it was not very long in coming—when he was compelled to ask for grace and for time to meet his gaming debts it was scant mercy and small pity he met with at their hands.

When he came to calculate the money he owed the magnitude of the sum filled him with alarm, but it was useless to say he could not pay, for they held over him the terrible threat of applying to Mr. Harcourt, which no one knew better than himself was a proceeding certain to ensure his instant dismissal, for the monarch of St. Styliotes' Yard was a stern man and a rigid one—who set his face mercilessly against gaming, and would never employ even in the humblest capacity any one suspected of betting or gambling.

Holding this threat over him, the gang of rogues succeeded in extorting from Duncombe every farthing of which he became possessed; even then their rapacity was not satisfied, and they cried for more.

Duncombe must find money or all his gaming transactions would be laid bare to his employer. It mattered nothing to them where or how he found it.

He might beg, borrow, or steal; that was nothing to them so long as certain sums owing to themselves were paid. If he had not got the money he must get it—that was his look-out.

So they spoke to him, coupling these words with oaths and menaces, and Duncombe, driven to despair, knew not how to raise the money to save him from ruin and disgrace.

It was the night before the commencement of this story that the evil one called to Duncombe's remembrance the cash-box, kept upstairs in the iron safe—a cash-box which was seldom opened, and from which he might venture, with comparative safety, to "borrow" the money he required to pay his debts—to "borrow," of course, with the intention of returning the amount in a few days when he received his salary.

On the night of the 23rd December Duncombe made excuses to remain at the office till a late hour. When every one else had left and St. Styliotes' Yard was buried in gloom, silence and darkness, he had crept upstairs and had managed to open the iron safe to find that after all his labour, risk and trouble were in vain. There was no cash-box there. In impotent rage he stamped and swore. Somebody had been beforehand with him, he believed, and his suspicions at once fell upon Gerald Talbot. He never for a single moment doubted that a theft had been committed, neither did he for a moment doubt that Talbot was the thief, and he cursed him from the bottom of his heart.

The reader already knows how on Christmas Eve Harcourt himself discovered the absence of the cash-box; how he accused Talbot of stealing it, and discharged him in consequence. This discovery was another severe blow to Duncombe, who had planned a scheme by which he might obtain enough of the plunder to pay his most pressing gambling debts and yet avoid the danger of theft. He arranged in his mind, never doubting Talbot's crime, to tax him with having stolen the cash-box, and obtain a certain sum from him to purchase his silence. But when Harcourt discharged Gerald from his service Duncombe's silence became no longer worth purchasing, and the wretched man was driven to despair.

Clinging yet to the straw of hope of obtaining a portion of the booty from the discharged clerk, he followed him and induced him to enter the little eating-house in the city, but Talbot's conduct there put an end to all hope of fair words procuring for him the sum necessary to shield him from disgrace.

Then it was, with the passion of revenge urging him on, that Duncombe formed the scheme of following Talbot on horseback and robbing him of the plunder he still believed the discharged clerk carried about his person. Easily planned, Duncombe salved his conscience by telling himself that Talbot was a robber, and that there could be no harm in depriving a thief of the proceeds of his dishonesty. Still some qualms of feeling made him hesitate, but his encounter with the "captain" on Ludgate Hill decided him, and he followed Talbot along the Riversham road, but, owing to the delay of his visit to Harcourt at Cardrose, did not overtake him till he was within a couple of miles of his destination.

On the lonely heath in the dark December night Duncombe overtook Gerald Talbot plodding on his sad and weary way. He dismounted from his horse after he had passed the unsuspecting youth, and, armed with a thick stick, awaited his approach.

From the deep black shadow he sprang out, and, in an assumed voice, demanded Gerald's money. Talbot was taken by surprise, but immediately closed with his assailant, and then a most terrible struggle ensued. Duncombe was a desperate man—Talbot was a resolute one. Locked in each other's arms they staggered backwards and forwards in the road, now one obtaining the mastery, and now another. In silence and in darkness they fought together, till Talbot caught his foot in the treacherous root of a tree and fell backwards.

As he fell, Duncombe raised the bludgeon he carried and smote him a violent blow on his fair, white forehead.

One low, stifled groan, and he fell to the ground, lying there to all appearance dead. Duncombe, in an agony of fear at what he had done, knelt by his side, felt for his pulse, and listened for the beatings of his heart; but the lad the moment before so full of life and strength lay there pale, motionless, insensate, and breathless.

Duncombe believed that he had killed him, and it was some time before he could summon up courage to touch the contents of the pockets of his victim; but by repeated applications to a brandy flask he nerved himself—shuddering the while—to the horrid job.

He felt in Talbot's pockets, nay, he turned them inside out, and beyond a few shillings—less than a sovereign—he found nothing.

The agony of fear at discovering the magnitude of

his crime when he thought he had slain Talbot gave way to the rage of despair on finding how fruitless had been his wickedness. He believed himself to be a murderer and a robber, yet he had not obtained the money that was to save him from disgrace and ruin. Remorse for his crime coupled with fury at its want of success almost drove him mad.

How he got back to London he hardly knew; all that he remembered was that, muddled and splashed from head to foot, he rode into the big city, on a tired, jaded horse, when the bells were ringing merrily in honour of the Christmas morn, and that the neatly dressed women and clean-shaven men he encountered gazed at him in wonder and bewilderment, as if he were a lunatic escaped from Bedlam.

In the back room of a wretched London lodging-house he passed his Christmas Day, forcing his fingers into his ears to shut out the maddening sound of the eternally jingling bells, and shutting his eyes to avoid the horrid sight ever present before them of the upturned face of Gerald Talbot, as it lay with the crimson gash upon his white forehead, and its fair hair matted and clogged with blood.

With delight he hailed the hour the following morning at which he customarily set forth for St. Stylites' Yard. Anything that promised distraction from his own thoughts was a happy relief, yet he hardly dared venture into the streets, for it seemed to him that all who looked at him might read the brand of Cain upon his brow, and that every person he met knew that he was a murderer.

He fancied a policeman followed him, and, with the perspiration standing on his brow, he made a long detour to avoid him. Never had the newsboys seemed so pertinacious in forcing their papers upon him as they did that special morning—papers he longed to see, yet dared not look at, for fear of his eyes resting on some such heading as "Brutal Murder near Riverham!" or, "Shocking Tragedy in Kent!"

When he reached St. Stylites' Yard he encountered Charles Harcourt, and shortly afterwards heard from him of the letter he had received from the landlord of the "Jolly Magpie." Then it was the idea occurred to him of endeavouring to turn the crime upon the city merchant, and then it was that the thought occurred to him of obtaining money from Harcourt as the price of his silence.

The reader already knows how Harcourt, overwhelmed by the news, and doubting his own actions in the face of the discovery that the cash-box had never been stolen at all and that Talbot perforce was innocent of the crime for which he had been discharged, promised Duncombe a cheque, and how, before he had finished filling it in, he had started off for Riverham, urged by a sudden impulse to go to the scene of the tragedy and make further inquiries; the reader may also remember how the loud-voiced, half-intoxicated "captain" had come to St. Stylites' Yard to insist on receiving the promised money from Duncombe.

As a last resource, on the chance that before leaving his office Harcourt might have filled in the draft, Duncombe went into his employer's private room. There on the table lay the open cheque book, with the cheque partly written. There was his name—"Pay Mr. Duncombe, or bearer"—the name again in the merchant's hand, but that was all; no amount and no signature.

The temptation was strong. He knew he could imitate his employer's signature; he had gone too far to have any conscientious scruples remaining, and, on the impulse of the moment, he sat down and took the pen in hand.

His first thought had been simply to forge a cheque for a sufficient amount to meet the demand of his noisy and pressing creditor, but then, was it not as easy to draw out the cheque for a thousand pounds as for ten?

The knowledge that he must sooner or later be discovered urged him on, and he filled in the cheque for fifteen hundred pounds, trusting to his being so well known at the bank to obtain the sum without question.

So far his crime prospered. The forgery was cleverly done. Harcourt's balance was a large one, and the money, in small notes and gold, was paid to him; and, long before his employer knew of the forgery he was on his way to Liverpool with its proceeds. There he instituted inquiries as to when the next ship would sail for America. He found the "Grand Duke" would leave in the course of a few hours, and at once took his passage.

No suspicion of immediate pursuit entered his mind, it did not appear to him to be possible that Harcourt could discover the forgery till the next morning, and by that time he would be tossing on the wide ocean miles away from England.

How Harcourt came to discover the theft sooner than Duncombe expected, and how he followed in pursuit have been already detailed, as have been the

subsequent events which led to the wretched clerk's incarceration in Newgate, where he made to his former employer the confession the substance of which is embodied in this chapter.

His expressions of regret and contrition were many, and bore the semblance of being heartfelt and real, and Harcourt was more than half inclined to put faith in the promises of repentance made by the man, who, a few hours before, had tried his best to take his life. But Duncombe's case was out of the hands of any individual. He had been handed over to his country to be dealt with according to its laws; and perhaps it was more horror of the retribution that must come than of the crimes he had attempted and committed that called forth the confession and the abject prayers for the display of leniency.

Let us turn from this miserable wretch, leaving him to his well-deserved fate, and draw up the curtain on the final scene of this life drama of crime and virtue, of love and jealousy.

CHAPTER XII.

All friends shall taste
The wages of their virtue, and all foes
The cup of their deservings.

LEAV.

THE drawing-room at Cardross once more! The same room where the reader was first introduced to Mrs. Harcourt, seated on a low chair before the fire, with the red light glowing on her fair cheeks and golden hair, as she turned over the leaves of her photographic album.

Once more she is back in her home. The room is a blaze of light, jewels sparkle on her arms and round her neck, the self-same jewels she tore from her and flung at her husband's feet on Christmas Eve; but her eyes sparkle brighter than the diamonds as they turn upwards with fond affection to her husband, who, hanging over the back of her chair, whispers in her ear soft, gracious, lover-like words, welcoming her back to her home.

But they are not alone in the drawing-room of Cardross. On a couch drawn up near the fire, which blazes and sparkles brightly, as if infected by the general goodwill, lies Gerald Talbot, very pale, very handsome, and very interesting-looking, but suffering no evil from his wound that a few weeks' tender nursing and gentle solicitude will not heal—and surely he could not be in better hands!

His wife, Florence Harcourt's sister, sits on a stool by his side and holds his hand in hers, waiting to do his slightest bidding, to be his servant, his slave, to anticipate his slightest want, so overjoyed is she that good has come out of evil, that her husband is restored to her, and that the future looks as bright now as a week since it looked hopelessly gloomy.

"Can you forgive me, dearest?" asks Charles Harcourt of his wife.

For reply she looks into his face with eyes that speak love and happiness, but he is not satisfied.

"No, darling, tell me with your own lips that you will forgive and try to forget that terrible Christmas Day—tell me you will pardon me for my cruel, unjust suspicions—tell me you will pardon my hardness and coldness!"

"Then tell me, sir, that you will not make St. Stylites' Yard a rival to me any more, and that you will allow a wife's claims to your society to be at least equal to money-grubbing among a lot of musty, fusty old ledgers."

"I promise that willingly—now do you forgive me?"

"Oh, Charles, have you not something also to forgive?" I tried to do my duty, but I failed. Can you forgive me for keeping Gerald's secret to myself? Can you forgive me my pettishness and pride, and—oh, can you forgive me that terrible suspicion I harboured of you when I thought that—that—you—"

He stopped her hesitating speech with a kiss.

"If I have anything to forgive, dearest, I do it freely, and would a thousand times over for the pleasure of seeing you here again, occupying your proper place by my fireside. But I have nothing to forgive. The fault was mine."

"Mine, too!"

"Well, Florence, a free pardon each way, and let us confess there was 'Fault on Both Sides.'"

It was the night of the 31st December, and as Charles Harcourt spoke these words the clocks round about struck twelve, and the bells from the neighbouring church-steeple struck up their gay and merry peal. As the listeners in the drawing-room of Cardross heard them not one but thought of the different feeling with which they had listened to their sound six days before, when to them all the world seemed weary and desolate.

Now all was bright and pleasant, and with eyes that sparkled, and with cheeks that glowed, the customary salutations went round.

"A Happy New Year!" Yes, away with the gloom and regrets of the past. Bury the year that has

died and welcome to the one that arises from its ashes. It is the new year that is to do everything for us—"Hope springs eternal in the human heart," but if the four people in Charles Harcourt's drawing-room were a little exhilarated with pleasure, surely there was reason for it, for never did new year dawn with brighter, happier prospects than on those who have played the chief parts in this story.

Pleasantly the merry bells sounded to them all, ushering in the new year—to all but one! What did he think of the new year as the sound of the bells came floating into his prison cell through the grated window? Ah, me! who shall say what sorrows are forgotten, what vows formed, what resolutions made, what evil deeds repented of, what good deeds planned, when the bells peal forth their merry welcome, and joyous voices chorus forth the pleasant greeting

"A HAPPY NEW YEAR."

THE END.

PROOF POSITIVE—OF WHAT?

"MONSTROUS depravity! Shameful! Now is not that a sight to discourage any Christian, particularly one that has laboured so hard as I have in the temperance cause?" said the worthy Silas Flint; and, pointing with his walking-stick, he directed his friend's attention to the opposite side of the street, there to see a boy of about fourteen years of age, miserably clad, proceeding with very irregular steps, sometimes nearing the curbstone, and then again going quite up to the shop windows, stopping quite still, and leaning against the buildings, as if for support.

"Is he intoxicated?" inquired Mr. Flint's friend.

"Why, certainly! Do you not see he has a bottle now, peeping from under his jacket? The young vagabond! The workhouse is the place for him!"

"He does not look as if he had been drinking. He is very pale, and, indeed, looks quite ill. Perhaps he is, and we are judging him wrongly. Let us speak to him, Flint. We can then find out. We may possibly be able to reform him."

"No, we are not judging him wrongly. That bottle is proof positive. It is no use to waste our time talking to him. Besides, it is near five o'clock, and I have to meet the Committee on Foreign Missions. If I had the time, I would find a policeman, and call his attention to him!"

The friends crossed the street just then, and came very close to the boy, who was gazing wistfully into a baker's window. He was very pale, with great mournful eyes, around which were dark circles. His thin lips were quite blue, and, indeed, his whole expression was one of great suffering. Silas Flint looked at him with a prejudiced eye and mind. He could see nothing but the bottle. His friend, however, was very doubtful as to the intoxication of the boy; and, seeing how wistfully he was gazing in at the bread, cakes, and so on, said:

"I do not believe it. He is ill, perhaps. I am going to take him in, and give him something, at any rate."

Just then the boy started off a few steps, reeled, and almost fell; but tightly he clutched his bottle. Several men came along just then, and one exclaimed:

"A young hopeful! Ain't he?"

The charitable feeling in the breast of Mr. Flint's friend received a check then. He could no longer doubt it was as Mr. Flint said. And that worthy gentleman went on his way.

Silas Flint was a good man in his way. If he saw any suffering he would relieve it, if he could; but he had little faith in anybody or anything. Well, perhaps we should be like him if we had had his experience. Mr. Flint was a bachelor of forty-five. Twenty years before he had loved and was engaged to a young girl who supported herself and aged mother by embroidery. The pay was not a living one. Late and early she toiled, until her young life was wearing fast away. Silas was poor then, working as a journeyman. His pay might have kept himself and wife, but the mother would be an encumbrance, an extra mouth to feed; so he dared not marry then. He could not trust to Providence for help. But he did trust in Mary. He had perfect faith in her love and constancy.

In the meantime, while Silas was waiting for the old mother to die, or his better days to come, somebody else came to see pretty Mary—one who had money enough to bring the invalid mother wine and delicacies—and so won her heart that she began with whinnies and pleadings, and continued for many weeks wondering why Mary would not love and marry the kind young man.

Mary felt her strength growing daily less; and the dreadful thought came, what if she should grow ill? Who would care for her mother? So the poor girl yielded. And one day when Silas called to tell her some better luck he had at length found, his Mary was gone—"married," the neighbours told him.

Since then Silas had believed in and trusted no one. In the years that had intervened he had grown in riches, and become quite a leading man in church and state affairs.

A week after the scene we have just related Silas Flint sat at his abundantly furnished table. A ring was heard at the bell, and the remark followed from Mrs. Hart, the widowed sister who did the honours of her bachelor brother's establishment:

"John, I think it is a beggar. I saw a boy pass the window. If so, tell the cook to give him his dinner."

Mr. Flint was just leaving the table, and said:

"Stay! I'll go myself."

Opening the door, he found standing on the step the boy he had seen a few days before.

"Please, sir—"

The child's petition was cut short by Silas exclaiming:

"Be off with you! I know you, sir!"

"Oh, sir! My mother—"

"Oh, yes, of course! The same old song—your mother! Your rum! Why, I declare you've got it now. Be off! I'll have you put where you can't get at rum!" exclaimed Silas, his breast filled, as he thought, with righteous indignation.

"Oh, sir, indeed, indeed—"

Slam went the hall door, and the boy tottered off. A few moments after a bright, pretty girl came into the dining-room, and, throwing down her music books, said:

"Was there a beggar-boy at the door, a moment or two ago?"

"Yes. Why, Katy?" answered her mother.

"Why, he was so miserable-looking, and the tears were trickling down his poor pale cheeks. I felt sorry for him, and gave him all the money I had—a shilling."

"Yes, and he will go to the first public-house and fill his bottle. Your money will do more harm than good," said Uncle Silas.

"Well, perhaps so; but I don't think it, uncle. And if he do, I cannot help it. Better so than for him to be hungry for bread, and I to refuse him," answered Katy.

A few weeks after this, when Silas Flint was absent from the city, a lady in the neighbourhood called on a charitable errand, soliciting Mrs. Hart's and Katy's help in the way of clothes and sewing for the orphan asylum. As she was leaving she remarked:

"By the way, Mrs. Right called on me this morning to obtain help for a case of great destitution in this neighbourhood."

"Who?—where? Did you find them very miserable when you went?" Katy asked, very much interested.

"I did not go—"

"Well, you sent. Tell me all about them. Mama, we must go."

"No; I did not send. I asked Mrs. Right if the person was a member of any church. If she had been of ours, of course I should have gone immediately. Mrs. Right did not know."

"Nor care, if she is like me. Good Heavens! Do you suppose, when our blessed Saviour bade His disciples 'to visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction,' to have 'pity on the poor,' He meant those of any particular denomination? Save me from such Christians! Well, I suppose, as I am claimed as 'ours' by none, I can with safety assist any and all. I only wish I had the means."

The lady was going off, feeling quite insulted by Katy's rather brusque remark, but Katy called her back, making some little apology, and obtained the information she wanted relative to the suffering people.

An hour after, Mrs. Hart and Katy found them. The mother sat by the bed and was gently rubbing the hands of her boy, "the widow's son." Katy immediately recognised the poor boy that her uncle had driven from the door. Paler, thinner far than when she saw him last, he lay. As she drew near, he opened his eyes. A smile of recognition, a sweet, grateful smile, greeted her, and he murmured:

"The kind lady, mother."

Katy's eyes were dim with tears. Seeing by a quick glance the many things she could bring to make the poor boy more comfortable, she hastened home to get them. Everything was done then to help and comfort the mother and her boy. But it was too late. Poor Willie was dying. The physician whom Katy had summoned gave no hope; only a few days at most would he linger.

Silas Flint returned that night, and Katy told him of the dying boy, and the great destitution of the mother.

Early the next morning Katy started, her uncle with her. All was still, not even the painful breathing of poor Willie was heard, as they stood at the partly opened door.

"Hush!" whispered Katy. "He is sleeping."

Hushed poor Willie had been—yes, to sleep in the bosom of his Saviour. No more suffering then. All was rest and peace.

Katy stepped into the room. With a quick, noiseless tread, she approached the bed. She knew then Willie was lovingly cared for. He needed no longer the tardy assistance which was offered then.

Silas Flint drew near, awed! Oh, if that was all! Conscience-stricken, he gazed on the little emaciated form. Oh! if he could only have recalled that harsh, hasty, ay, cruel treatment! What if the boy was as he supposed? He might have saved him.

The look of suffering had passed away. An expression of perfect peace rested on his face. About the lips a smile still lingered, and Silas Flint thought how like that mouth was to one he had loved so well long years before.

A sob in a distant part of the room caused both Katy and her uncle to turn, and see the poor mother, standing in an attitude of the deepest grief, gazing on a suit of well-worn and patched clothes which hang over a chair. She turned, in answer to Katy's kind, sympathising words, and Silas Flint beheld the Mary he had loved so long ago!

He sprang forward, caught her hand, and said:

"Mary! So near me, and suffering! Oh! why did I not find you before? Why did you not send to me?"

"I could not! How could I?"

Then Silas thought of the child's coming unbidden, and the result. A groan of anguish escaped his lips.

Mary raised the jacket from the chair, and a bottle—the bottle, the proof positive—fell out. She stooped and picked it up, crying anew then, and saying:

"My poor darling! He never thought of this when he came home that last day, he was suffering so much!" and drawing out the cork, she went to the fireplace and shook out into the ashes the contents, curds of sour milk and whey.

Silas Flint stood aghast!—Proof positive to him then that he had misjudged the poor boy, cruelly treated him, and was in truth instrumental to his death! At that moment he would have given all his possessions to have recalled his conduct.

Gradually he drew from Mary the story of her sufferings. Her husband had always treated her kindly, giving her every comfort, but spending his money recklessly. How he made it she knew not for a long time. At length it came to her, the dreadful truth; she was living on the gold won at the gaming-table! One after another of her children had died, until only Willie, the youngest, was left, the poor afflicted one. He was subject to convulsions, which had affected him so fearfully he could scarcely walk. "He could only totter about!" Mary said, and Silas groaned again with bitter memories.

Her husband had died five years before, leaving her, of course, destitute. For some time, until the last few months, she had managed to keep from hunger, at least. But lately her health had failed. She could work no more. One kind friend she told of, who gave Willie a bottle of milk every day.

"The last time he was out, this lady, your niece, met him and gave him some money, which kept us from hunger that day and the next. But Willie, poor darling! did not care to eat much after that day. He fell and injured himself coming home. From that he died."

Dear Willie! patient, suffering Willie! so harshly judged and cruelly treated, sleep on your sleep of perfect peace! Silas Flint's heart will never cease its aching on your account.

What was the great surprise of the neighbourhood may be well imagined, when poor Willie's little form was carried to the home of Silas Flint, to be borne from thence to a beautiful cemetery, and placed in Mr. Flint's own ground.

When they returned from the funeral Silas brought the clergyman with him, and, seeking Mary, he said:

"It is a sad time, Mary, to ask you to come to me. But I cannot let you grieve alone. I must try to comfort you. Come! I have never offered to another woman your place. Will you take it now?"

He put out his hand, hers was clasped, and standing before the minister, their lives were united.

Silas was a changed man after that. He sought out the suffering ones near home. The most manifest depravity was dealt gently with. He was ever, from that awaking day, seeking to atone for his past terrible error by future acts of true charity.

F. A. B.

MENTAL LIFE OF WOMEN.—"Few men," says a gentleman of intelligence and observation, "have any idea of the mental life of women, or how much thinking is done by them. It is a fashion to say that women don't think; but it is a mistake. My father died when I was twelve years old, and I was brought up with my mother and sisters. I know that they, and the ladies with whom they associated, were thinkers; and yet I remember that, even as

a child, I was struck with the difference when a gentleman called. There is a difference between your sex and ours. A man stands by his thought: carries it openly like a banner which he is bound to defend, while you, apparently more impulsive, and with a reputation for greater spontaneity, are in reality much more reticent, and, in a certain sense, do your thinking on the sly. Among yourselves you think deeply, and express yourselves with vigour. In the presence of a man you conceal your thoughts and reflect his. Whether it is a fault of your education, or of your approbateness, I cannot tell, but such seems to be the fact."

THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

BEYOND all comparison the most sacred and the most interesting spot in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives. It is a hill with three rounded elevations rising about 300 feet above the Temple area, 2,724 ft. above the sea. The northern height is called Viri Galilee, or "Galilee," from the tradition that here the angel addressed the apostles: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" The second, crowned by a miserable village—Kefr-et Tûr—which surrounds the minaret and dome of the Church of Ascension, is called the "Mount of Ascension," from being the traditional, though obviously not true, site of that stupendous miracle. The third elevation, which is less considerable and less marked, has no regular name, but is sometimes called "Prophets," from its vicinity to the tombs of the prophets.

Scopus, to the north of these three heights—so called because hence it is believed that Titus surveyed the city; and the Mount of Offence, the traditional Mount of Corruption, believed to be "the opprobrious hill" which Solomon rendered infamous by idol temples when his heart, though large,

"Reguled by idolatresses, fell

To idols foul."

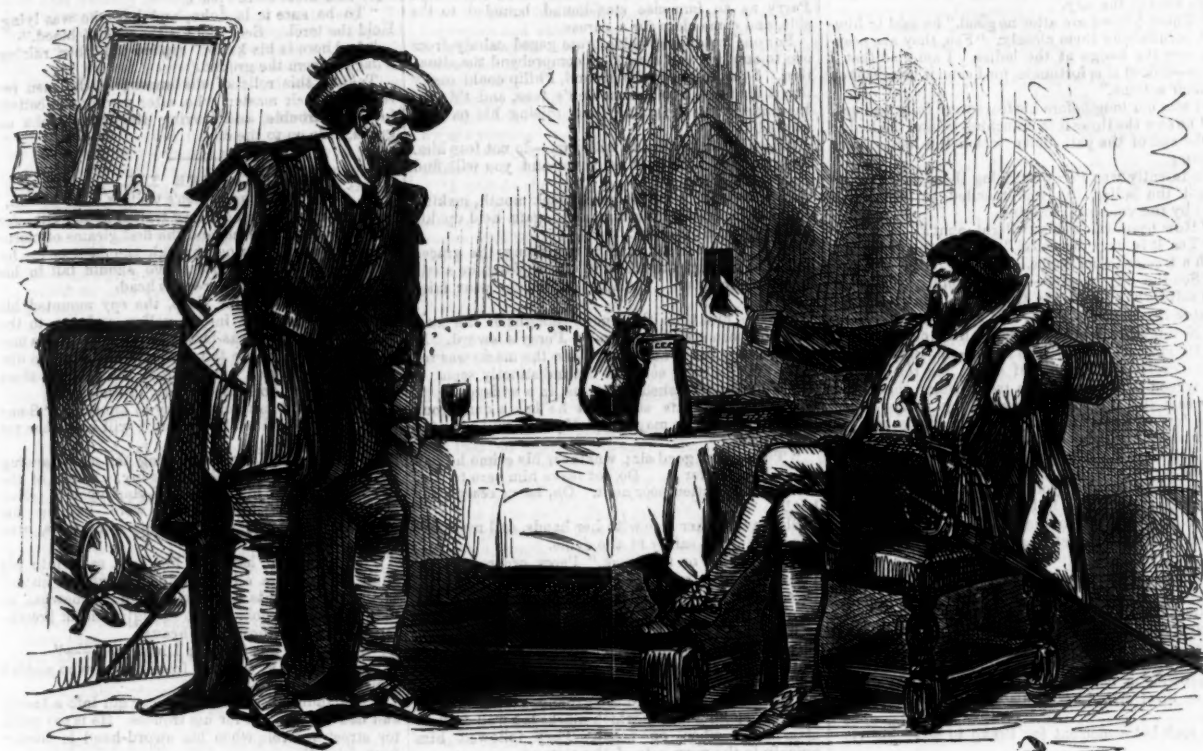
can hardly be considered as belonging to the Mount of Olives. But the Mount itself is a scene of transcendent interest. In the mystic vision of Ezekiel "the glory of the God of Israel," charioted on the rushing wings of the fourfold-visaged cherubim, first stood above the threshold of the temple, and then "went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city."

It is possible that this passage may have originated the rabbinical fancy "that the Shekinah, or Presence of God, after having finally retired from Jerusalem, 'dwelt' three years and a half on the Mount of Olives, to see whether the Jewish people would or would not repent, calling 'Return to me, oh, my son, and I will return to you.'" "Whether or not," says Dean Stanley, "the story has a direct allusion to the ministrations of Christ, it is a true expression of their relation respectively to Jerusalem and to Olivet. It is useless to seek for traces of His presence in the streets of the since ten-times captured city. It is impossible not to find them in the free space of the Mount of Olives." Olivet, therefore, is to a Christian one of the most hallowed spots of the Holy Land.

THE vexed question as to the admission of ladies to the medical classes in Edinburgh has been settled by the decision of the Edinburgh College of Surgeons that it is not desirable to have mixed classes in the college.

COUNTERFEIT COIN.—We have received from a correspondent a specimen of a counterfeit florin, many of which, there is reason to believe, are at present in circulation in London. Our correspondent properly describes it as being "remarkably well executed by the electro-plating process; it has somewhat of the genuine 'ring,' so that amongst other coins it will easily pass muster, but the dullness of the surface (on one side at least), and its lightness when balanced in the hand, will expose its quality to a careful observer."

THE HUSBAND.—Ladies sometimes do not value their husbands as they ought. They not frequently learn the value of a good husband for the first time by the loss of him. Yet the husband is the very roof-tree of the house—the corner-stone of the edifice—the key-stone called home. He is the bread-winner of the family—its defence and its glory—the beginning and ending of the golden chain of life which surrounds it—its controller, law-giver, and its king. Yet, we say, how frail is the life on which so much depends. How frail is the life of the husband and father! When he is taken away who shall fill his place? When he is sick, what gloomy clouds hover over the house! When he is dead, what darkness, weeping, agony! Then poverty, like the murderous assassin, breaks in the window—starvation, like a famishing wolf, howls at the door. Widowhood is too often an associate of sackcloth and ashes. Orphanhood too often means desolation and woe.



[THE CONSPIRATORS.]

THE LOST HEIRESS OF LATYMER.

CHAPTER XI.

Mischief, thou art afoot,
Take thou what course thou wilt!

Julius Caspar.

SITTING in one of the alcoves of the club-room at Hacker's tavern were two men, in semi-military costume, who appeared to be waiting for the arrival of a comrade or friend. Slowly sipping their wine, they lounged about their chairs with a kind of indolent nervousness, and now and then talked for a few moments with each other.

At length one of them rose from his seat and turned towards the window.

"You limp a little yet, I see; how is your leg?"

"Very nearly well, Captain Oscar. I scarcely feel it except after sitting for some time."

"You are lucky, Nick; such a wound would have laid me up for a year."

"I daresay. So it would me if I kept myself steeped in liquor as you do. Do you ever draw a sober breath?"

"You're a nice one for a preacher. I'll wager you drink twice as much as I do. It would kill me to drink as you do—and yet you try to preach to me!"

"Only to show you that it isn't in the quantity taken, but in the capacity of the man. Now you know very well that you can't drink without being the worse for it, and you ought to have the courage to resist."

"If I never did anything worse than drinking, Nick, I should feel myself a happy man."

"That is always the reply, Captain Oscar, but that doesn't answer the question. You drink when you know it ruins you, and because you haven't the courage to resist. That is cowardice. When cornered on it you are 'thankful you do nothing worse,' or 'wish that you did nothing worse.' Well, a man who goes into villainies deliberately, and for the sake of good, is not one to preach."

Captain Redmond knew that he was guilty of great crimes—knew that he had led, and was leading, a lawless life; but, nevertheless, he despised weakness even in crime. He looked with disgust upon the man who had to steep his brain in liquor to carry out a plan which his brain had previously conceived.

As bad as he was, the master had true courage, and despised weakness in any form in a man. He looked out of the window while Captain Oscar drank in silence, but presently returned to his seat.

"Nick, there was one thing about that night which

I never could understand," said Captain Oscar. "I knew you had a hand in it as soon as I heard the story; but—"

"But what? In what do you find a mystery?"

"When the guards came upon you why did you not give the alarm, and call on us for help?"

"Was it not better for us all as it was?"

"To be sure it was better; but, then, few men would have dared to attack so many single-handed."

"Chut! when one knows what ought to be done the mere fact of numbers is nothing. It should not influence him unless there may be a question of prudence. In this case prudence told me that your fellows would make so much noise that an army would be down upon us in no time."

"So you attacked them alone?"

"No, I had Parry with me." The captain did not heed the shrug of his companion's shoulder. "Besides, there were only a dozen of them, and we got them separated easily in the action. Ah! hum!" said Redmond, stretching his limbs. "I wonder where Parry is."

Again he turned to the window, but ere he reached it the door opened to admit the spy. The latter looked cautiously around the room.

"Are you alone, Nick?—that is lucky."

"Only Oscar there, and I believe he has dropped off to sleep. We have been waiting since noon."

"I have been preparing the villa; she must go there this very night. Have you told him?" asked Parry, pointing to the sleeping soldier.

"Only that we had work to do; but have you arranged all with the dame?"

"As far as necessary. They will walk by the Thames this evening. You should wait as long as possible—until they start back, I mean—then bring her to the villa as quickly as you can. Who goes to take charge of Dame Rachel?"

"You, I suppose; can you not?"

"I must be at the villa. Take one of the men. Here is some gold, Nick, in case of trouble; but you need have no fear. Take your old name of Bravo, and no one will know you."

"But the pardon; have you—"

"Have I seen the queen? Yes; you need have no fear. She has promised to give you a full and free pardon soon."

Captain Redmond—or Nick Bravo, as he was known in London—looked keenly into Parry's eyes; but the latter bore his gaze unflinchingly. His treachery was not shown to the man who was bartering his honour with him. Parry had not yet been able to see her majesty, and even should he succeed in getting an audience, it was not his intention to ask a

pardon for the whilom pirate. It might be that he would be better away when the proposed plot had succeeded, and it was safe, at least, to have some way of disposing of the man who must perforce know all of his schemes.

For a few moments they conversed together in low tones, while Captain Oscar was snoring in his chair. Bravo shook him vigorously when Parry had gone.

"That is the worst of such men as these," said Bravo to himself; "they must drink, even when they know that it ruins them. One never can depend upon them."

Captain Oscar slept on, while Bravo stood in deep reverie over him. This time he shook still harder.

"Come, come, man! *Sapriste!* Will you sleep all day?"

"What is the matter, Nick? Oh, I believe I've been asleep. Has Parry been in?"

"Yes, and gone long ago. You're a sound sleeper, Captain Oscar, whatever else may be said about you. Come, we have some distance to go now. Where is Captain Brett?"

Captain Oscar found the man in the tap-room; and together the three men started for the suburbs of the city. Bravo gave his commands to each ere the cottage came in sight.

"No violence now—understand me; and on no account let your voices be heard. You, Caspar, must use force enough to prevent the dame from screaming, but no more. Keep your masks close. After leaving her at the cottage, you can go home, Caspar, and come to Hacker's to-morrow."

They were now within sight of the cottage gate, and had carelessly lounged into a close-grown hedge to conceal themselves until the dame came out.

Full of enthusiasm in the cause he had espoused, and burning with ardour to serve the maiden who had made so deep an impression on his heart, young Henry Percy rode on towards the cottage. He had taken two servants in case of necessity, and just as the sun was sinking passed the cottage gate.

He saw nothing of Victorine, nor were there any signs of visitors. Riding by some half-mile, the young man turned round, and, leaving his men in a clump of willows not far from the river, he himself walked forward to inspect the cottage. Scarcely a dozen steps had been taken when he saw the two ladies coming from the gate. He stepped behind the line of willows.

It was evident that the two females were about to take the path to the river. This would bring them very near where he was then standing, and, stepping out to see that his men were hidden, his eyes unconsciously wandered towards the cottage,

At that instant he saw the three men, half stooping, running along behind the hedge which lined the main road to the city.

"Those fellows are after no good," he said to himself, scrutinising them closely. "See, they are peeping over the hedge at the ladies. I am glad that I came—indeed it is fortunate, for I cannot be mistaken in their actions."

It was not long before his fears were fully realised, and he saw the three men crouching behind the hedge at the end of the path down which the ladies were walking.

So intently was Percy watching these men that he forgot the ladies, but was recalled to himself in time by the voice of Victorine.

"How beautiful is this twilight, aunt!"

"Yes, it is very beautiful," replied the dame, but with a tremor in her voice.

"See the city yonder—how peacefully it lies in this soft light! You are trembling, Aunt Rachel—what is the matter?"

"Nothing, dear—the air feels a little cold."

"Do you feel it so? I do not—oh, Heavens!"

The exclamation was half a cry, for the maiden had turned at the sound of a tread behind them, and now saw the three men approaching. They were but a few yards from the spot where Percy was lying when the villains came up. The ladies paused, and Victorine clung to her aunt in terror.

"Ah, my pretty dear!" said Bravo, with a laugh; "I have been seeking you everywhere. Come, my fair one, a prince has fallen in love with you, and sent me to bring you to him."

"Heaven give me strength to resist!" Victorine prayed.

She pushed away the hand which was reached to seize her.

"Leave me, sir; do not touch me! Help! oh, Heaven, help!" she cried, in despair; and, hastily breaking from the arms of the villain who held her, she ran with all speed towards the river.

Throwing a mantle over the head of the dame, Casper Brett seized her in his arms and ran up the path.

It took but a moment for Bravo to seize his victim.

"Help, help! For the love of Heaven save me!" Victorine cried, with all the strength of despair; but Bravo had covered her face, and was holding her struggling hands, when Percy rushed from his covert, followed by his men.

With one blow he laid Captain Oscar upon the ground. Bravo was now alone. He dropped the maiden instantly, and attempted to draw his sword, but they were upon him before he could use it, and it fell from his hand as he turned to struggle with his assailants.

Nearly fainting from terror, Victorine had started to run, but was again seized, and, finding herself unable to resist longer, sank down upon the ground.

"Spare me, sir; what have I done?"

"Hush! I came to save you. I am Percy."

"Percy! Kind Heaven, my prayer was heard!" And, leaning back upon his breast, the reaction was so strong that all consciousness left her.

Meantime Bravo had struggled with his captors, had thrown them off one after the other, and with a bound sprang through the willows before they could stop him. But Bravo was not one to leave his weapon behind. While they followed him through the willows he sprang back into the road, and once more felt the good blade in his hand.

"There are but three of them, and I will revenge Captain Oscar's wound," he said, to himself. "Now then, bounds, come on," he cried, aloud, placing himself in an attitude of defence; but thinking it would do no good to fight now, with the speed of a deer he once more sprang through the willows and ran towards the city.

"Are you hurt, dear lady?" Percy asked; "shall I not carry you?"

"Oh, no, I am not hurt; I can walk. Oh, where is Aunt Rachel? Poor aunt, what can have become of her? Do see if she can be found."

"Do not fear. We will find her soon. Where is Philip?" he asked of one of his servants.

"He is with the horses."

"Call him here; and, John, you can take the horses to the cottage gate."

"Poor aunt! Oh, sir, do not forget her. Let us try to find her now."

"I will not cease my energies until she is found, dear lady; but first let me take you to a place of safety."

"Take me home, please. Good sir, how—" she hesitated, and seemed to think deeply. "Did you know of this—this—"

"Of this outrage upon you? No; but I had reasons to suspect some one who visits the cottage secretly, and I came to learn the cause."

"Visits our cottage secretly! Oh, sir, you are in error. No one visits us in any secret manner."

"You know of no one, I am sure; but there are bad men everywhere. Ah! here comes Philip," said Percy as an immense stag-hound bounded to his side, and came close for a caress.

For one instant the noble brute gazed calmly from one to another, and seemed to comprehend the situation. Standing upon the ground, Philip could easily thrust his nose into the maiden's face, and this he did tenderly, at the same time raising his paw towards her.

"He will make friends with you—do not fear him. He loves you already, I perceive, and you will find him a worthy friend."

Philip opened wide his great black mouth, making the maiden shrink from him, and again held up his paw as a token of amity.

"He is your friend, and is practising the graces he has been taught to prove it. Henceforth he shall be your protector. Philip, you behold your mistress."

For the first time they now thought of the man who had been stricken down by Percy's sword. It was growing dark, and even when the mask was removed the features could be but indistinctly seen.

"Is he dead?" asked Victorine, in a whisper.

"His heart beats still; but he has a dangerous wound. I hope he may live. My men will come for him later."

"Thank you, good sir; whatever his crime he has been punished for it. Do not leave him here to die. But I had forgotten poor aunt. Oh, let us search for her!"

She covered her face with her hands, and muttered a prayer for the safety of the dame.

"Put Philip on the track," Percy ordered; then, taking Victorine upon his arm, started for the cottage. The little hand trembled violently as it lay upon his arm, and once more he offered to take her in his arms. Maiden modesty made her shrink from this, and she mustered all her strength for the walk. But she was very weak.

They had gone but a few yards when Philip ran by them with his nose to the ground, giving vent to the low, sniffing whine which marks the well-trained stag-hound when on scent. They followed him quickly to the very gate of the cottage.

"Your aunt is safe at home. See, the candles are burning."

"I pray Heaven that she may be safe!" said Victorine, scarcely above a whisper; then, entering the yard, they walked up to the porch.

The door was unlocked. Pushing it open with eager expectancy, Victorine led the way into the room where the light had been seen; but both paused on the threshold in surprise. Sitting at a table, with a pile of gold before her, was Dame Rachel, who was so much absorbed in counting it over that she heeded not their entrance until they stood before her. She quickly threw her apron over the gold.

With an anxious look the dame rose from her seat.

"My child, my dear, you are safe! Oh, how did you escape? Such a fright as I had! And this gentleman—did he save you?"

"He did, aunt. He saved me by perilling his own life. Good sir, how can we thank you enough for so great a service?" said Victorine, trying to look up into his face; but her eyes fell before his, while her cheeks seemed burning with blushes.

"To have saved you from annoyance and danger is reward enough. But how was your rescue effected, good dame?"

"I escaped from the villain who held me. I was getting gold for a reward to any one who should find my dear child here. Oh, Victorine, how terrible!" said the dame, embracing the maiden.

Percy dropped his eyes, in thought, as he felt the insincerity of the dame's speech and manner, but he could say nothing then, and prepared to depart.

"You will have a strong protector in Philip, dear lady," he said to Victorine at the door; "depend upon him. But I will still further guard you until this mystery can be solved. My men shall be near you; do not fear."

"Heaven reward you, sir, for this kindness to a maiden like me. Oh! why have I foes? What harm have I done in the world that these men should wish to injure me?"

"That we may soon learn. You are young, and have the beauty which tempts bad men to try and lure you into their power. Perhaps you may be troubled no more."

She understood him then, and, with a cheek burning with shame, bade him adieu.

That she was intended to be the victim of some heartless libertine Percy did not doubt, and, riding homeward, he vowed to defend her until the man who should be her protector returned to hear the story of her wrongs. While he was at the cottage his servants had gone for the wounded man—having roused some cottagers who lived some half a mile away—but he was nowhere to be found.

"His companions have returned for him," said one, "for this must be the place."

"To be sure it is, John, and here he was lying. Hold the torch. See! here is the pool of blood."

"And here is his knife," replied the other, raising a dagger from the ground.

Taking this relic of the encounter, the men returned to their master, who, after paying the cotters for their trouble, and leaving the trusty John on guard, rode on to the city.

CHAPTER XII.

Men's vows are women's traitors. *Cymbeline.*

UNTIL near morning Parry waited at the villa for the arrival of Victorine, and the first gleams of morning light were pouring through the lattices as he gave up all hope. That Bravo should fall in his allotted task had not entered his head.

Without pausing for sleep, the spy mounted his horse, and, pushing into a gallop, rode up to the cottage. Daylight was fast approaching. For a moment he halted before the gate, and was about to dismount when a man sprang from the hedge a short distance below, and stood quietly in the road.

"Defeated!" muttered Parry to himself. "Some one has wind of the affair; but I will have her yet in spite of them."

He rode on to Hacker's, leaving the man standing in the road without farther scrutiny. In one of the rooms he found his agents. Lying upon a pallet, surrounded by servants who were bathing his wounded head and administering stimulants, was Captain Oscar.

The blow that had laid him low sank into his skull, leaving him alive barely, but wholly unconscious. Stimulants had revived him somewhat, so that his heart throbbed more strongly, but his breathing was still stertorous and heavy.

"So, so, this was it then; I imagined—"

Parry paused at a signal from Bravo, who nodded towards the servants.

"Yes, indeed," said he; "Oscar got into a brawl, and had his pate cut for his trouble. He is too quick for street quarrels when his sword-hand is clumsy from drink."

"Is it serious?"

"Serious enough, the surgeon says—he has but just now left us. Caspar and I nearly broke our backs bringing him here."

All this was said for the benefit of the wondering servants, but Parry soon took Bravo aside and learned the truth.

"Then you have no idea who it was, Nick?"

"Not the slightest. You should know that better than I. But for making a noise and drawing attention to the cottage, I would have avenged the blow which struck him down."

"You are right, Nick—you are seldom prudent, but this time I commend you."

"You are wrong—I am always prudent where prudence is necessary."

Bravo was right. He was a man endowed with a high, unerring courage—a quality which raised him far above his fellows—a quality which would have made him great had his life been good; one which now made even his baser acts seem heroic. He was a strange mixture of the noble and the peasant—a peasant ennobled by this one quality of courage, but lacking the early training that might have made him great and good.

"Where prudence is desirable I possess it, Parry, and I have the courage to run away when it is necessary. Can you understand that? Perhaps not. Don't you know that it often requires more real courage to run than to fight?"

"I can't argue the point, Nick! What is to be done now? Can you manage—"

"To get the maiden for you? Certainly I can, if you wish; but you had better wait a few days, I think. I was going to say something, too. You speak of my prudence, was it prudent for you to refer to this maiden as you did at dinner yesterday? You toast her as the belle of London—you are overheard by some young blood; he follows, watches, and defeats you to take the fair maid himself."

"Do you think that was the cause of it?" asked Parry, absently.

"Of course I do."

Parry did not dispute the belief, although he knew very well it was not true. That Sir Christopher Hatton had left men to guard the girl he fully believed, and was now running over the names of his followers to think which could have betrayed the plan.

He went into the club-room alone, and for an hour sat in deep thought, revolving a course of action for the future.

"I will go to the queen at once," he said, at length; "I will force myself upon her, and it will be strange if I cannot win her. Burchley, too—it would break his heart to lose Latymor."

For a short time Parry talked with Bravo, telling him that nothing should be done immediately, and leaving money and orders, he left the tavern. He was nearly down-hearted. At every turn he seemed to be defeated. Money was growing scarce with him. As yet her majesty had not noticed his report of the Catholie plot, and he had to force it upon her attention.

"The crisis has come," he told himself that evening as he started for the cottage; "the crisis has come, and now or never must I strike the blow."

Even in the twilight he saw a man lying under the hedge near the cottage gate, and knew well that he was set there as a spy. Parry rode on for a half-hour and returned to the city.

A few days went by, and at length his plans were matured. He was ready now to strike the blow which would give him fortune, and with this fortune he would be able to strike again for a noble name and estate.

He had not been near the cottage since the night of the attempted abduction, but now he made his way through the open field to enter by the rear. A deep growl fell upon his ear as he stood by the back door, and he heard the heavy steps of a dog trotting through the hall. Dame Rachel had a suspicion that Parry was there.

"How that great beast frightens me," she said as Philip began to run about the hall. "Do take him to your room for a time—I have a headache."

"Come, good Philip," called the maiden; "come, sir!"

But Philip showed no inclination of leaving the door before which he had placed his massive body ready to give a warm welcome to the intruder, whoever he might be. He knew that there was a prowler about, and tried his best to tell his young mistress that he had better remain to watch the door.

More than once as she dragged him away by the collar he paused on the stairs to look behind, and to give a low, warning growl. Once in her own chamber, Philip placed himself before the door, and lay with his nose to the crack, ready to give warning.

Unsuspecting as she was, and lacking the deep impressions of age, the young girl did not connect Philip's warning with her former dangers, and now gently chided the brute for his unsociability. But he knew his duty, and remained to guard the door, pausing now and then to gaze over his shoulder in token of affection.

"What beast is that?" asked Parry as soon as he was safely within the room; "how did he come here?"

"It is a magnificent animal, Parry—a Scottish stag-hound, with a chest as deep and broad as your own. He could lay his paws upon your shoulders easily—but I am afraid of him. He is like a baby in her hands, however."

"But whence came this animal you praise so highly, and of whom you are yet afraid?"

"Young Henry Percy gave it to her the night he brought her home—you know when I mean."

"Percy!" exclaimed Parry, starting back in his surprise. "Percy? are you sure it was he, dame?"

"Was he not here with me for an hour? Did he not see me sitting at this table counting—"

She paused suddenly, and Parry looked up inquiringly.

"Well—go on, counting—"

"Counting my gold. I did not see them until both stood in that door."

"So it was Percy who saved her, and he saw you apparently unconcerned, counting your gold! It is well I had determined to act, for you would have forced me to it."

"How could I tell that he would bring her back here? I thought she was with you then," said the dame, beginning to cry.

"Well, couldn't you have waited until morning before counting your gold? A nice mess you've made of it. You made him suspect you, so he has kept a watch here since."

"I did the best I could."

Parry had spoken with irritation and anger, but of what use when this weak woman was so ready to throw herself at his feet and take even blows from his hand? What wonder that he believed she was his slave, ready to do his bidding?

"The best you could!" He sneered the words back at her, and was silent for a moment, then spoke in kinder tones. He could not do without her; it would do him no good to strike her; what had he but to make the best of her follies?

"If she had the least particle of strength," he thought, "she would be invaluable to me; but she is the weakest of all weak women."

He spoke more kindly to her, and waited until she had grown calm. It was a great surprise to him to hear that the maiden had been rescued by Percy, and he wished to get at the whole truth. Little by little

he drew it from the dame, and learned of the visits that had been paid by Percy, of the dawning love between those two which they could not conceal; of the rescue and subsequent guarding of the cottage. It was clear to him, then, that another antagonist was added to the number of those already in arms against him.

"Listen, Rachel," he said, presently, "listen to me. You seem to have no idea of the stake for which we are playing—you are like a child. Couldn't you try to have some decision for once, and keep her secluded for a day?"

"I will do the best I can, Parry."

"The best you can! How you irritate me by talking in that way. I begin to think you are in league with Sir Christopher, or perchance this Percy has bribed you with his gold. It seems to me that if you were really with me in this affair, you could manage better." There was an ugly gleam in Dame Rachel's eyes as she listened to this, but she said nothing. "She is in your charge—you have absolute control over her, why, then, do you not exercise it when it will be so much to your advantage?"

"To my advantage, Parry? To yours, rather. Tell me now, once for all, what you mean to do by me."

"Do by you? What a question! Have I not told you that our interests are one? Once put me in possession of this estate, you shall share it with me, and I will make amends for all the past."

"Will you do that?" she asked, quickly.

"The little fool!" Parry said to himself, "how her face brightens over that promise! Of course I will, he added, aloud, "I will do all that you may ever desire from me."

"Will you swear it?"

"I will swear it if you wish."

"That is good. I am a weak woman, Parry, and one who has been deeply wronged by you. It was you who destroyed my life, my hopes, my all! It was you who bent my mind from truth, and made me a criminal! Hear me out—I have a little more to say. You made me what I am, and I have no refuge but in you! My youth is gone; I have no position, I have no hope but in you! You have sworn to be just to me, and I believe you once more. Make me what you will, a deeper criminal if you wish, but keep your oath to me, or it may go hard with you."

"Why, Rachel, what is the matter with you? What have you in your head now?" asked Parry, alarmed at the sudden change in her manner.

He had never before seen so much force in her.

"Nothing is the matter with me. I do not choose to act as your tool any longer, only to be deceived in the end. You have sworn to act honestly by me—very good! Now I will do the best I can for you, and test you for the last time. You give me gold; I take it because it may be of service to me; but do you think that I would do all this for gold alone?"

He had fallen into a reverie, losing the meaning of the concluding words, but roused himself at the mention of gold.

"Certainly you shall have gold. I will pay you well. Keep her under your eye for the next two days; have her here the evening of the day after to-morrow, and you shall have a hundred guineas."

"Ah! one hundred?"

"Yes, one hundred." He did not observe the scorn with which she repeated the words. "The girl must go with me at once. Sir Christopher returns in three days, and he must not find her here. Do you understand, dame?"

"I understand you. I will do my best to keep my part of the contract."

Very calmly she listened to his instructions, and once more she seemed the meek, docile woman who had been his slave for so many years. But there is an end to all human endurance, and a point at which even a worm will turn upon its tormentor.

No sooner had he left the cottage than the dame threw herself upon the floor, grovelling in her own abasement, and vigorously thrusting her hands into her hair.

"What a base creature I have become," she cried to her own heart, "yet what escape is there for me but through him? For him I forfeited all claim upon the world, and now I must cling to him even through crimes. Crimes! No worse than those of the past; but her innocence and virtue show me how vile I am. "Such is the fate of woman. We are raised to the skies or dragged down for ever. Once more I must trust him. Once more I must believe the man who has so often betrayed me. I will take his gold. He thinks that I love it. So I do, but only as an instrument of revenge should he again play false with me. But once more I trust him, even so far as to join him in torturing an innocent child. But yet, if he should harm her, his head shall pay the forfeit."

Even the weakest of human beings are dangerous at times, and the very weak Dame Rachel was now in a dangerous mood.

Human nature shows many strange inconsistencies. How often do we find the strong and great possessed of petty foibles that would seem ill in even the lowest and weakest; and how often do we find in the weak temporary gleams of greatness?

Not once in a century do we find a perfect hero; but human nature is made up of strength and weakness, of vacillation and decision, of good qualities and bad ones, anomalies united in one heart, the general nature being directed by culture—perhaps by chance.

Many a man has lived in poverty and want, compelled by force of circumstances to do small actions which he loathed, who had the heart of a prince; many a prince has lived whose soul was unworthy the body of a peasant.

When morning came Dame Rachel had lost the resolution which had animated her the day before, and was once more the weak, complaining, vacillating, capricious woman.

Breakfast was over; Victorine had finished her work in the garden, with Philip by her side, and was about retiring to her room, when Lady Anne Wardour's carriage stopped at the gate.

With an exclamation of joy, Victorine sprang down the walk, holding Philip by the collar, and was violently thrown into Lady Anne's arms, as related in the first chapter.

"She has come again," said Dame Rachel to herself, as she peered through the lattice; "how can I prevent them from meeting? I cannot. Yet will I do my best to prevent anything confidential. They will come in here for their talk, but I shall not leave them alone."

However, in this calculation she was mistaken. Lady Anne knew only too well that Dame Rachel would watch them closely, and her communication was for Victorine alone.

"How excited she grows," thought the dame as she watched her niece; "something unusual has occurred," and stepping to the door she called them in.

In a few moments Victorine came rushing into the hall, and, without a word, ran to her room. Not even pausing to adjust the hat and mantle which she had seized, the excited girl returned to the door, and gave a hurried good-bye.

It was in vain that the dame pleaded and questioned, she could get no information, no satisfactory solution of Victorine's agitation, and at length she was forced to see her run away with speed that defied pursuit, to be followed by Lady Anne's carriage.

"It will be the loss of a hundred guineas to me unless she return by the morrow," the dame had said as she turned into the cottage.

Giving directions to the one aged domestic about household affairs, the dame went to her own room, and, carefully fastening the door behind her, took out her store of gold.

"It is nearly enough," she thought, "nearly enough to give me revenge for the past if he again play me false, and to provide a home for my declining years."

Sinking into a reverie over her precious store, Dame Rachel lost all count of time, and was surprised when roused by a deep growl from Philip to find that the sun had already sunk in the west. With another growl Philip sprang to the door. A carriage had drawn up at the gate, and a tall, dark man, of haughty bearing, was descending from it.

"Sir Christopher, as I am alive!" exclaimed the dame. "What evil genius brought him to-day?"

She hurriedly went down the walk to call away the faithful sentry there, and to receive the cool greetings of her lord.

"Where is my niece?" the baronet asked as he glanced about the room.

"She has gone to ride with a court lady, Sir Christopher."

"With a court lady? with whom, pray?"

"Lady Anne Wardour. Indeed, Sir Christopher, I tried to keep her. I told her you would not be pleased; indeed, it was against my—"

"Hush, dame! Granted it was not by your wish, but how do you account for this acquaintance? How long has Lady Anne known my niece?"

"She has been here often, Sir Christopher, and I did not know how to prevent it. Many more besides have called since that affair."

"Since what affair, dame?"

"You've not heard then, Sir Christopher?"

"It is no matter whether or not I have heard, what is your story?"

"He must have heard all, and that brought him here," the dame thought; and believing this she dare not equivocate.

The story seemed to produce no effect upon her hearer.

"You know nothing more, Dame Rachel? You do not know who were the instigators of this attempt? Was it the work of Neville?"

"I haven't an idea about it, Sir Christopher—not

one. I only know that I was much frightened, but escaped, and that young Percy rescued her."

Sir Christopher Hatton scrutinised her keenly for a moment, but gained nothing from it. He was puzzled to understand the motive of this attempt to abduct Victorine.

"She is too weak to lie about it without detection," he thought, "and I presume she tells the truth. Pahaw! how could any one get a clue? It is some gallant struck by her pretty face. I must speak with the girl herself."

Without a further word Sir Christopher rose and turned to the door.

"Tell my niece that I shall see her to-morrow," he said, over his shoulder, as he walked out of the hall.

A moment after his carriage was rolling towards the city.

"Another great lord at the cottage," said a peeping neighbour; "depend upon it there is something wrong about that maiden. Yet could ever a heart like hers harbour a thought of guilt? If I do not find out this mystery, I'm mistaken in my abilities, that's all."

(To be continued.)

SCIENCE.

OPAL GLASS.—The artificial sulphate of baryta, when mixed with silicate of soda and spread on a sheet of glass, gives it a beautiful milky appearance. After a few days it will form with the silicic acid, which is liberated, a perfect combination, so that even hot water will not affect it. When this glass is exposed to a higher temperature the film will be changed into a beautiful white enamel.

USES OF CARBOLIC ACID.—Many beneficial uses have been found for carbolie acid, and naturalists now find that by washing out with it the inside of birds which they have not immediate time to skin and stuff, the birds may be kept a week or more in a sound and flexible condition. During the prevalence of the kine pest, carbolie acid was largely used as a disinfectant; and farmers have discovered that the "ticks" which infest sheep and lambs can be killed by dipping the animals in a bath of the acid diluted with water. Great care should be observed not to make the solution too strong, as there is danger that the animals might be killed as well as the tick.

AN ELASTIC PREPARATION OF GLUE.—When a thick solution of glue is mixed with tungstate of soda and hydrochloric acid there is precipitated a compound of tungstic acid and glue, which, at from 30 deg. to 40 deg. C., is sufficiently elastic to admit of being drawn out into very thin sheets. On cooling it becomes solid and brittle, but when heated it again becomes soft and plastic. It appears that this material has been successfully employed instead of albumen in calico-printing, in order to fix the aniline colours upon cotton; it is also used in tanning, but the leather becomes as hard and rigid as a plank of wood. It is recommended as a lute or cement.

COATING FOR OUTSIDE WALLS.—The following coating for rough brick walls is used for painting lighthouses, and it effectually prevents moisture from striking through: Take of fresh Rosendale cement three parts, and of clean, fine sand one part; mix with fresh water thoroughly. This gives a gray or granite colour, dark or light, according to the colour of the cement. If brick colour is desired, add enough Venetian red to the mixture to produce the colour. If a very light colour is desired, lime may be used with the cement and sand. Care must be taken to have all the ingredients well mixed together. In applying the wash the wall must be wet with clean fresh water; then follow immediately with the cement wash. This prevents the bricks from absorbing the water from the wash too rapidly, and gives time for the cement to set. The wash must be well stirred during the application. The mixture is to be made as thick as can be applied conveniently with a whitewash brush. It is admirably suited for brickwork, fences, etc., but it cannot be used to advantage over paint or whitewash.

IMPROVEMENT IN BRIDLE BITS.—This invention consists in making the cheek pieces by which the bit is hung to the cheek straps independent of the bit, to a certain extent, so that the latter may be turned in the horse's mouth to bring the curb chain to bear upon the jaw without moving the cheek pieces. Also in placing small metal rollers on the bit, to prevent the horse from seizing the bit in his teeth. The side pieces have square holes in them, by which they are fastened upon the ends of the bit. The extremities of the bit outside the square shoulders, are cylindrical, and upon these cylindrical portions are loosely placed the lower ends of the cheek pieces, where they are retained by nuts, spaces

wider than the cheek pieces being left between the nuts and side pieces by means of which the bit and side pieces are allowed to rotate freely. The spaces are partially closed by flanges projecting from the side pieces and enclosing the lower ends of the cheek pieces, with the exception of a recess in which the side pieces rotate. This arrangement enables the rider to tighten the curb without interfering with the cheek pieces. The bit is more particularly designed for cavalry use, and is the invention of Colonel Thomas B. Hunt.

GUNPOWDER.

GUNPOWDER will burn fast or slow according to its penetrability by the igniting flame. When in dust the mass is not readily penetrated, therefore the slow combustion. In grain, on the contrary, the flame will readily penetrate the angular interstices; but in proportion to the size of the grain so will be the penetration and combustion of each particular grain. Some forty years since sporting guns were in general use with flint locks. The ignition was slow; the powder was quick or small grained. When detonators were brought into use, it was found requisite to reduce the proportionate charge of fine grain, and the result was that the range and force of the shot were much decreased—vent holes were also required. Let this trial be made:—Charge a common double gun with three drachms of fine and then of coarse powder (say No. 1 and No. 8). The No. 8 will shoot harder than No. 1. Perchance the recoil from No. 1 will deter from a second trial, as four drachms No. 8 will be more agreeable to the shoulder. The fact is now pretty well recognised that detonators, igniting so quickly, require slow burning powder, but to what extent increase in size of grain may be advantageously carried in detonators we cannot say; a limit is found by the smallness of the gun nipples causing mis-fire. It is probable that by thus using large grained powder, detonators now shoot equally well with the old flint gun.

A word upon percussion powder and its admixture with ordinary gunpowder in any shape.

Gunpowder is supposed (taking the heated condition of the gases produced into consideration) to expand to some 1,500 times its previous bulk or volume, thereby creating an enormous and elastic force which confined in a gun impels the shot. Such is not the case with powder rightly called "percussion." The ignition of the latter creates small extra volumes; it is also all but instantaneous, percuting the barrel and shivering the shot. It is, therefore, almost void of projectile force, and hence wholly unsuited for shooting purposes.

IMPROVED MODE OF GRAINING WOOD.

The object of the improvement about to be described is to facilitate and cheapen the process of graining, so that instead of, as now, requiring for its adequate performance skill acquired by long practice, it may be performed by the comparatively inexperienced more rapidly than it can be done by the most skilful under the old process.

Hitherto the operation of graining has been tedious, laborious, and expensive. It is claimed, however, for this method that at least four times as much work can be performed by its use as could be done heretofore, while the quality of the work is fully equal to the best hand graining.

The operation is performed by the aid of stencil plates. These plates can be cut in any desired style of graining from natural woods, by taking off the exact pattern of the grain on tracing paper, transferring the same to the plate, and cutting the plate after the pattern thus traced. All the woods now used on account of their beautiful patterns of graining may be thus copied by the use of the plates. The whole is finished in quantity by the use of the steel fine comb, the teeth of which are covered with graining cloth, and then drawn over the plate several times while the latter is held by one hand firmly against the door or wainscot to be grained. Various portions of the plate may be used at intervals, to make variety of pattern, so that with one panel plate a number of doors may be made entirely different from each other. All the designs in the various plates are made to match each other at any section, and the entire plates also match, so that endless variety of pattern may be secured. Thus tame repetition is avoided.

A full set of stencil plates for this purpose numbers ten or more in making the various patterns, and to perform graining in any place large or small.

The stencil plates are made of brass, steel, or other suitable metal. In these plates the desired pattern is cut, and the surface is indented or covered with a series of small bosses, formed by indentations on the opposite side, so that when placed on the surface, and the plates wiped or brushed, as hereinafter described, those portions of the paint not desired to be removed shall remain undisturbed for subsequent treatment.

These plates are held stationary during the operation by small steel pins at the corners. The operation is as follows:—The desired graining colour is

first rubbed in. Then the proper plates are applied, and held by the pins, as above specified. The plate is then rubbed over with a rubber cloth, or other suitable pad, which penetrates the openings in the plate and removes the graining colour lying underneath the old pattern. The plate being then removed, the work is completed with the ordinary graining tools.

CHRISTMAS DAY last fell on a Sunday in the year 1864. The feast will not again recur on the first day of the week until the year 1891, in consequence of the fact that the year 1876, when the revolution of the "solar cycle" would again make Christmas Day and Sunday coincident, happens to be a leap-year, and thus the Sunday is skipped over as in 1848. The "solar cycle" is completed in 28 years.

INDIANS have invaded the settlement of Bahia Blanca, to the number of 1,400, and carried off 4,000 cows, 10,000 sheep, and everything portable in their way. The savages went up to the very walls of the town, and the victims include three Englishmen. There are about sixty English settlers at Bahia. This news is given on the authority of the correspondent of the *Brasil and River Plate Mail*.

MISS BURDETT COUTTS'S CHRISTMAS CARD.—Most of us at Christmas-tide are gratified by receiving some more or less elegantly emblazoned little cards, bearing pleasant messages and kind wishes from absent friends. As usual at this season, the stationers' shops are full of these pretty Christmas and New Year's cards, but a lady famous for wealth, taste, and liberality has, we think, hit upon a very happy and novel idea with regard to these agreeable little tokens of amity: she has commissioned Mr. Macmillan, of King's Road, Chelsea, to prepare a die for a Christmas card to send to her numerous friends, which should have a special and individual character, and might well be preserved as a small memento of the sender. The centre of the card is occupied by a rustic frame entwined with holly and ivy, emblematic of Christmas. In one compartment is an embossed facsimile of Miss Coutts's favourite dog, whilst the other is occupied by a pretty robin redbreast. At the angles of the compartment containing the dog are Miss Burdett Coutts's initials, embossed in rustic letters; whilst the robin is headed by H. B., which are the initials of Mrs. Brown. Above the frame is a scroll in mauve bearing the legend "Christmas, 1870," whilst at the bottom of the frame is a pretty scroll of rose-pink, with the inscription "New Year, 1871," in gold letters. This scroll is held up by two wrens embossed in buff. The card is finished by the following inscription: "Miss Burdett Coutts's and Mrs. Brown's best wishes of the season." These words are embossed in brown rustic letters, the initial letters being in burnished gold. This card is remarkably well executed; the dies are very sharp and clean, and the hand colouring is delicate and harmonious. It will be enclosed, for transmission in an envelope finished with an eight-pointed silver star, which is very simple and effective.

THE EARL'S SECRET.

CHAPTER VII.

The first bringer of unwelcome news
Hath but a losing office. 2 Henry IV.

PERCEIVING the earl's momentary agitation, Lady Valeria was seized with a sudden quail of fear, which rendered her pale face still whiter, then a revulsion of feeling sent the warm blood surging in a crimson tide to cheeks and brow until the former glowed like twin roses.

"There, now I have my own rosy daughter back again. She shall tell me somehow all about the wonders she has seen, but now she is too tired to talk, only she must tell me. Is she not glad to see her lovely papa once more?"

"Yes, father, I am very glad indeed to see you, and I do so long to be once more in dear old Silvermere."

His lordship looked ruefully at Lady Valeria, who saw at once that she had made a blunder, and bit her lip with vexation.

"Call me papa, pet, just as you used; or have you grown so sage during your few months of contact with the world that the names you loved in childhood are no longer dear to you?"

"Forgive me, papa," returned Lady Valeria, in embarrassment; "I am not quite myself since—since our drive."

The earl led his daughter to a seat, and stood looking at her in admiration not unmixed with distressful wonder.

His child was changed! He felt that, with bitterness of spirit. She was no longer the same affectionate, happy creature he had sent from his

loving arms; but, instead, a cold, self-possessed, reticent woman.

It seemed to the earl as if a gulf had suddenly come between him and his child, for ever shutting the impulsive child-woman, with her confiding, artless ways, from his reach.

Lady Valeria watched his countenance earnestly yet furtively. She saw the disadvantage she was at, and was puzzling her brain to find the key which should unlock for her the heart of the disappointed man. Her cunning rapidly conceived that Lady Valeria had been light-hearted, gentle, and loving, and she who had usurped her place should be so also.

With a suddenness which astonished the earl, she sprang up and circled her arms about his neck. She felt she must offer some excuse for her coldness, and her busy thoughts quickly brought one to her aid. She exclaimed, with earnestness:

"I cannot! I will not believe it, though she tried so hard to make me. Only think, dear, kind papa, a woman came to me in Venice, and told me a dreadful story about you, the best of men. She said that, years ago, before you had ever seen mamma, you married her, and afterward deserted her. It is false, papa, I know it must be, and I was foolish and wicked to let myself believe such a story."

The earl drew back from his daughter's embrace and looked into her deep, unflinching eyes as though he would read her very soul.

Lady Valeria was firm; she had schooled herself well.

"Who told you this story, Valeria?"

"Her name, she told me, was once Hortense Lesage."

The earl recoiled backward, and sank heavily into a chair.

"Ah! she is still alive? You saw her?"

His lordship was livid with rage or hate.

"She is alive! I saw her! It seems, then, that you did know her whether she told me true or false!"

"And she dared to tell you, my child, that story?"

Lady Valeria was regarding the earl closely, every shade which crept over his classic features was noted. The pallor which for a moment sat upon his brow at the mention of Hortense Lesage and the hot flush of guilt or shame which succeeded it were observed and mentally commented upon.

No one loves another better for laying open before him some glaring and long-concealed sin, and his lordship turned angry, loveless glances upon his daughter. She, however, had too much at stake to allow the paternal love of the haughty earl to slip from her thus.

"Pardon me, papa," and her twining arms were again about his neck. "It was so wrong in me to harbour a thought of your wrong-doing! The woman was doubtless insane. Tell me you will never think of it again."

The earl put her away from him, and, without making any reply, began walking the floor—a favourite occupation with him whenever his mind was ill at ease.

Lady Valeria watched his stony visage with vague uneasiness.

After a short interval, passed in silence, Lord Walsingham paused before his daughter.

"Valeria, my conduct may seem strange to you. I have known this woman of whom you speak. She was a scheming, reckless woman. You will see that she could not have been my wife when I tell you that she had a husband before ever I saw her, and he still lives. By whatever name she is now known, she has a legal right to but one title—that of Mrs. Draper."

It was Lady Valeria's turn now to take the hue of the dead and falter in her steps; but her emotion was unnoticed by the earl, for at that moment the Duke and Duchess of Alloway were ushered into the apartment.

In a short time dinner for the party was announced; it had been delayed to enable Lord Walsingham to dine with them, and not long thereafter Lady Valeria was free to return to her own room.

She entered it with the air of one released from a disagreeable task. She sank gracefully into an easy-chair, and gave herself up to pleasant thoughts. Her cheeks were flushed pink and her eyes were glowing like twin stars from triumph and excess of joy.

She folded her hands and mused, apparently unconscious of the lapse of time.

Quiet reigned throughout the hotel, and most of its inmates had retired to rest before she stirred from her seat. When she did so she divested herself of her rich, trailing robe, and put on a dainty wrapper of white cashmere, which she found lying across the bed. Of the earl's daughter's luggage only a small trunk and travelling-bag had been carried to her room.

The pseudo-lady looked about for the keys, but without success. After a careful and prolonged search made with nervous eagerness, she desisted,

and rang the bell for her maid. She waited impatiently till Howard entered with wild wonderment depicted in her face.

Lady Valeria frowned at the dilatory maid.

"Pardon, my lady, I was in bed, and well nigh asleep, when you called me."

"Where are the keys to my trunks?"

Howard raised her head quickly and opened her round eyes to their fullest extent.

"The keys, my lady? surely I put them back when I took out the things—your dress, and wrapper, and nightgown."

Lady Valeria bit her lip in dismay. She felt that Howard was watching her curiously, and trembled lest the clever girl should discover that a cuckoo was in the nest of the dove.

Her face flushed hotly as she said:

"Get them at once, and open the trunk. I wish to find something that is there."

The maid crossed the room and took from the table a small octagonal box with a morocco covering, and, returning with it in her hand, stood mutely before her mistress. She waited thus a few moments, then, seeing the apparent abstraction of the lady, she ventured to ask:

"Shall I get out the keys, my lady, or will you?"

Lady Valeria coloured again, more vividly than before, and blundered:

"You may get them, of course."

Howard extended her soft palm, poisoning the box on the other hand, but Lady Valeria gave no heed.

Howard was visibly nonplussed.

"My lady, will you give me the little key to this box?"

Lady Valeria's face paled suddenly now. The room was whirling before her eyes. Silvermere seemed receding beyond her reach. This girl would surely find her out. She stammered almost inaudibly, her eyes fixed on the little box:

"The key to that. I have forgotten where I put it."

Howard stepped back a pace, but kept her eyes on her mistress's blanched face as she said:

"You put the key in your pocket, my lady, just before you went to drive with the duchess."

Lady Valeria felt herself on surer ground in a moment. The room was no longer in a whirl. Silvermere was yet within her grasp. She took the box from her maid, saying, calmly:

"So I did, Howard; I am very forgetful to-night, and no wonder. That terrible scene with the robbers has put me quite beside myself."

She shuddered and passed her white hand over her eyes, as if to shut out the sight of something evil, and added:

"The key is gone, the highwaymen took everything, even that. Can we not force the lock?"

"I think I can open it with a bent wire," returned the maid.

"And be an hour in doing it," said Lady Valeria, tartly. "I tell you, girl, I must have the key to that trunk, and immediately. One would think you were used to picking locks to hear you talk."

The girl blushed confusedly.

Lady Valeria took the box and commenced wrenching at its lid with resolute purpose, but without effect.

Not a whit discouraged, she put it upon the floor and stood upon it first with one slipped foot and then the other, but the strong hinges were unmoved.

Seeing this, she carried it to one of the great windows. Placing it on the sill, she brought the ponderous sash with its weight of glass down upon the tiny thing, crushing it out of all shape.

Seating herself in a chair by the window, Lady Valeria gathered the fragments into her lap.

"What a pity, my lady," said Howard, in a deprecatory tone. "You forget the solemn charge Lady Walsingham gave you when she dropped that box out of her weak, trembling fingers into your hands."

Lady Valeria gave the girl a searching glance, and wondered whether, since she evidently considered her strange forgetfulness the result of her fright, she might not safely question her.

"What did mamma say? I have forgotten."

The girl looked aghast at her mistress, saying, inwardly:

"Poor thing. She is crazy. She has inherited her mother's malady. That fright with the highwaymen has turned her head."

"It was when her ladyship was taken down with that dreadful fever, my lady, five or six years ago" that the maid waited to see if the mind of Lady Valeria retained any memory of her mother's illness.

"Yes, I remember mamma's having a fever."

"She took the box from under her pillow one day, and told you to carry it away before your father should see it, and keep it near you always; and if she never recovered she charged you to search it thoroughly for something hidden, and as you hoped for Heaven never to rest till you had righted the wrong."

While the maid talked, Lady Valeria listened attentively. She sat for some time in silence as though her mind were groping in the past, but in reality her active brain was busy with the immediate present.

She had formed her plans and calculated on finding a comparatively easy pathway to the goal of her ambition. But instead she was already walking through thorns, and her feet seemed becoming entangled in the net which, consciously or not, Howard was stretching around her.

"You may go, Howard," she said, dreamily; "I shall not want you longer to-night."

The maid cast a rueful glance at her lady's gloomy face and left the room.

As soon as she had gone Lady Valeria began an examination of the contents of the box lying in her lap. A bunch of burnished keys linked together by a golden band. A few curious stones and shells from the Mediterranean. One or two doubtfully antique relics and a lump of lava from the crater of Vesuvius. These were all. She laid them aside with a yawn, and took up the ruined box. As she did so the loosened bottom fell out, revealing an inner compartment. In this was tightly wedged a small sheet of paper, a lock of curly, auburn hair, and a miniature painted on ivory.

The picture was that of a boy apparently three or four years old, with a handsome, wistful face, around which clustered an abundance of auburn curls. The eyes were deep blue, large and lustrous.

Lady Valeria scanned the pretty features closely and picked up the hair, at once concluding that it had been worn by the original of the picture.

The letter was next examined. It bore a date of eighteen years before, and ran as follows:

"To the Right Honourable the Countess of Walsingham:

"May it please your ladyship, your wish is fulfilled. I did not drop the boy, by accident as he commanded, into the river, but brought him away with me. I am glad I did. I am glad you met me in time. The boy passes for my nephew. I have made the neighbours believe that he has been living in London with his aunt. I will deal by him in future as your ladyship may direct. Yours to command."

The writing of this letter was a mere scrawl, though great pains had evidently been taken with both the writing and the composition.

The letter bore no signature.

Some peculiarity in the formation of the characters made Lady Valeria start and look more closely at the writing than she had done while reading it.

"It is, it must be my uncle's writing," she said, with eyes wide open with astonishment; "no one else could ever make such letters as these."

Her uncle, she remembered to have heard, was once numbered among the very poor, but had suddenly, through some mysterious means, become placed in easy circumstances.

For the commission of some crime he had suddenly left his home in Wales, and with his family, consisting of his wife, a daughter and nephew, had gone, no one save his sister, Mrs. Lyell, was informed whither.

Shortly after his removal her mother had been summoned to visit him, and she had been taken with her, though she had no knowledge of the place she had thus visited.

But who was "the boy" spoken of in the letter? and what was he to Lady Walsingham and the earl? In what mysterious manner was he thrown into the keeping of Harman Lesage? and where was he now?

These questions Lady Valeria found it impossible to solve, so, carefully folding the paper with the picture and hair in a neat parcel, she selected the proper key from the bunch, and proceeded to unlock the trunk. She laid its contents out upon the carpet, her dark, unfathomable eyes sparkling whenever some unusually elegant article of apparel met her gaze.

In the bottom of the trunk she came upon several packages of letters nearly all bearing English postmarks.

The greater part of the letters were in the bold, masculine hand of Lord Walsingham, and were full of paternal love and solicitude; others were written in a loose, impulsive style, which told the unhappy state of the lonely mother's mind; and others still from intimate and dear friends, who counted the hours long which kept the sweet violet of Silvermere so long from home.

All these letters Lady Valeria read with intensest interest, after which she replaced them in the trunk for future study—all save two; these she selected from the package containing the letters of Lord Walsingham, and put them, together with a couple of bank-notes which she extracted from an elegant purse, in an envelope, which she directed to her mother and sealed, having first inserted a slip of paper on which she had pencilled these words: "All

is well." After this she disrobed, and placed her head upon the pillow where another's should have rested.

There were no prayers offered for guidance and protection from a kneeling figure by the bedside. Instead of lifting her thoughts heavenwards, the beautiful supplanter, laying her peachy cheek upon her arm, built for herself a castle in dreamland, and, wandering through its airy, melodious halls, she passed the night.

CHAPTER VIII.

Shall we wear these glories for a day,
Or shall they last and we rejoice in them?

Richard III.

LADY VALERIA awoke with a shivering shriek, just as the gray dawn was faintly lighting the chamber. She had dreamed—and how relieved she felt now that she was awake that it had been only a dream—that the wronged one stood reproachfully over her. She had seen her castle shattered by the bare uplifting of the arm of the earl's rightful daughter.

Lady Valeria arose in the bed, and gazed wildly about the room, half expecting to behold the accusing eyes of the real heiress of Silvermere glowering upon her from some shadowy corner.

The perspiration oozed in great drops upon her forehead. Her eyes had the expression of those of a hunted animal as she turned them from one piece of furniture to another, seeking in their murky shadows for the form of the one whose likeness and whose name she bore.

She sighed with a feeling of profound relief when fully assured that she was the sole occupant of the room, and, wiping the damp from her brow, she sank back, murmuring:

"It was but a dream—a horrid, terrible dream!" and she closed her eyes and clasped her hands over them, the more effectually to shut out the unwelcome vision.

She dropped asleep again after a while, and was awakened by Howard, who was lustily beating a tattoo on her door, and calling:

"If you please, my lady, it is nine o'clock, and his lordship starts in an hour for London."

When she was admitted, Howard looked at the pale face with a sort of pity.

"You have not rested well, my lady?"

Never before the previous evening had Howard felt it incumbent upon her to address her mistress as "my lady" every time that she spoke to her, but somehow with those haughty eyes looking her through and through she felt that she must do it now.

"Why do you think that, Howard?"

"You are so pale."

That was all Howard said, though she had other reasons for thinking her mistress was not refreshed by sleep. She had hoped that a good night's rest would restore her to something like her former self. Her eyes—those wild, fathomless, dreamy eyes, which had so sorely puzzled her the evening previous, and which she had hoped would resume their wonted expression—were still blazing with suppressed fire.

"If you have stared at me long enough, I am ready for you to do my hair."

The maid dropped the glittering chatelaine she had picked from the table in dire dismay, and rushed to do the bidding of her mistress.

Never in that cutting voice had Lady Valeria been before known to address her and Howard felt humiliated.

She unbound the glossy ebony coils from about the shapely head, permitting the loosened hairs to fall in a cloud over the snowy shoulders. She brushed the soft waves back from the low brow with deft fingers.

She paused in her work abruptly, and her hands fell to her side as though all power had forsaken her frame. Her eyes were glaring at the lady wildly, for there, over the left temple, she had found a cross-shaped scar.

Only a moment Howard stood as if petrified, then she stepped back aghast.

"Oh, my lady, how came that there?"

Lady Valeria looked exceedingly annoyed, but though she comprehended at once what her maid had discovered, she was determined for the future to maintain her self-possession, whatever hazards she might encounter. She asked, calmly:

"Well, what is it?"

"That scar—a perfect cross," and Howard's hands went up and down in her bewilderment. "The same scar—the upright part pointing towards the ear—that I saw upon that forlorn-looking girl in London."

The eyes of Lady Valeria blazed with her lofty anger.

"Girl, do you reflect what your words and manner imply?"

"No, my lady."

Pale and scared, Howard sank into a seat, with a look of superstitious horror on her blank face;

and Lady Valeria then proceeded to arrange her own hair, carefully brushing it so as to conceal the tell-tale scar, muttering under her breath as she now and then cast furtive glances towards the cowering girl:

"The marplot! Either her stay with me must be short, or mine will be but transitory at Silvermere."

Having finished her hair, Lady Valeria attired herself in travelling costume, and then the silent lady's-maid was ordered to see to packing the trunk, and her mistress, flinging at her a look of defiance, swept from the room. In the corridor she met the duchess, who, like herself, was going to join the two noblemen at the breakfast table.

Lady Alloway paused for a moment to look into the garden from a window in the corridor, and Lady Valeria availed herself of the opportunity thus afforded to overtake and speak with a servant who chanced to be traversing the corridor. After a short colloquy, during which she made use of all the French at her command, she took from her pocket the envelope in which the night before she had sealed the money and the two letters of the earl. She dropped a piece of silver into the palm of the servant, and with a whispered "A person—a lady—will call for this letter to-day. You will give it to her quietly, and without attracting attention," she passed on, and was soon rejoined by the duchess.

Soon after breakfast the earl and Lady Valeria took leave of their friends, and with Howard and his lordship's valet took passage for Dover.

When they reached London it was beginning to grow dark, and Lady Valeria was not sorry that they were to tarry at the earl's town house over night. They found a carriage awaiting them, and they were soon rolling rapidly through the streets in the direction of the west end.

There was an unusual flush on the lady's face, and she drew her veil so as partially to conceal her features as they passed scenes familiar to her.

But when the mettlesome steeds were guided from the busy mart where poverty and affluence jostled each other without concern, and they entered upon the quiet, aristocratic street in the west end in which stood the grand mansion of Lord Walsingham, she threw back her veil and gazed out with rapt yet jubilant mien.

A man on foot was passing near. With head bent so as to render his face invisible, he seemed absorbed in his own thoughts.

He raised his sallow face abruptly, and his eyes met those of the lady in the carriage.

He paused from his steady march involuntarily, and glared at the occupants and the carriage itself as if fascinated.

Lady Valeria neither paled nor flushed as she recognised this man, but a mortal terror seized and chained her every faculty, turning every drop of blood in her veins to ice.

She sat motionless as a statue, while the carriage rolled on, leaving the electrified Leonard Grafton transfixed to the pavement.

When the stately carriage halted, and its occupants alighted before the escutcheoned front of Walsingham House, the young man was still standing there.

He removed his hat, and wiped his heated brow in perplexity. Just then a man in livery entered the street from the basement of a house near by, and Grafton accosted him.

"My good man, can you tell me who the lady and gentleman are who are just ascending the steps of your house?"

The man bowed, and replied:

"Yes, sir. The Earl of Walsingham and his daughter, Lady Valeria."

"Now, are you perfectly sure that lady is his daughter?"

"Certain, sir. My sister is housemaid at Walsingham House, and I often go there to see her."

"But you may be mistaken. How do you know that lady to be his lordship's daughter?"

"How do I know the nose on my face is mine? I have seen her many a time."

"How long is it since you last saw Lady Valeria?"

"Before to-day? It's some time, sir." The man scratched his head a moment in thought. "She wasn't here with the family last winter, and I mind now Molly's telling me she had gone abroad."

"Thanks, my man!" said Leonard Grafton, with knitted brows, and he sauntered away, musing moodily.

CHAPTER IX.

The grief that does not speak
Whispers to the o'erfraught heart and bids it break.

Macbeth.

WHEN the wronged daughter of Lord Walsingham returned to consciousness, after being carried from the landau by Randal Gabron, she found herself lying upon the turf beneath a tree whose overhanging branches nearly reached the ground, and saw a strange face bending with anxious anxiety over her. It was the face of Mrs. Lyell.

She arose to a sitting posture, and looked confusedly around.

"Where am I? Oh, why am I in this gloomy place? What has happened, and where is Lady Alloway?"

"Hush!" interposed Mrs. Lyell, gently, and then came the sound of horses' hoofs on the hard road, followed by a loud inquiry, which seemed to come from the horsemen, as to what was the matter.

Then the deep voice of the Duke of Alloway, declaring in thrilling tones that Lady Valeria, daughter of Earl Walsingham, had murdered the duchess, was distinctly heard, and the poor girl sank again upon the grass utterly bewildered.

"Come," said Mrs. Lyell, seizing her by the arm, "if you are Lady Valeria, the men are searching for you. The gentleman has offered a large reward for your capture. Come with me and I will save you."

Only partially recovered from her recent faint, and the fright which had induced it, her mind in the wildest confusion, the earl's daughter arose to her feet.

She was too weak to walk without tottering, and she staggered forward a few paces in the direction of the landau.

"Not that way, lady, not that way, unless you wish to give yourself up to your enemies. Let me take you to a place of safety until you can communicate with your friends. You are too weak to walk, let me help you."

As she spoke Mrs. Lyell lifted the bewildered girl in her arms and bore her under the shelter of a wild vine, which completely covered one end of the haunted house.

"Stay here till I go round the house, and in it if I can, and see what accommodations for hiding it will afford us until to-morrow. I think if we can get within its walls you will be safe, for no sane man will brave a meeting with the ghosts which are said to walk here. Of course, I shall not leave you till you are with your friends, who, I hope, will be able to clear you from the charge laid against you. I never could find it in my heart to leave a fellow being in distress whom my company or assistance could benefit."

Mrs. Lyell departed, well pleased, to explore the haunted house, leaving the victim of her double-dealing shrinking in affright under the noxious vine.

The woman returned after an absence of some fifteen minutes, gliding under cover of the vine with the noiseless, treacherous creep of a serpent.

"Can you walk now, lady, or shall I carry you?"

The captive—for such, as the reader knows, she was, though ignorant of the fact itself—arose slowly.

"I must return to Calais immediately," said she, pressing her hands from whose tapering fingers the gems had been ruthlessly torn to her throbbing temples; "papa will arrive to-night. This terrible mistake must be rectified. Surely no one can believe the dreadful story."

"Listen! Don't you hear the carriage rolling away? They are going to Calais without you, bearing away the dead body of the duchess—doubtless the horsemen tarry behind to scour the woods for you. You will come with me into this house; you see you can do no better. There is a poor old woman living in the back wing, out of sight of the road. She has taken advantage of the story of the house being haunted to make it her home, rent free. She will lodge us to-night, and to-morrow I'll agree to go to Calais for you and see your father. Come. But first bear in mind I have told the old woman that my daughter, who was out for a walk with me, was taken suddenly ill and can go no farther. She seems to be as deaf as an adder, but it may be pretence, so I shall call you Griselda in her presence. I have a daughter with that name, and it will seem natural to call you so, especially since, as near as I can see here in the starlight, your hair and eyes resemble hers."

Mrs. Lyell took the poor girl's hand and led her to the entrance of the back wing. She knocked loudly on the door, which, after a shuffling noise from within, was opened by an aged woman, in a mob cap, kerchief and wooden shoes. She spoke in English.

"Walk right in, madam. Seeing mademoiselle is ill, you're welcome, though no one knows that old Adelaide lives in a haunted house, and sorry I should be to have it known."

Mrs. Lyell raised her voice to a high pitch as she assured her hostess that her secret should not be betrayed.

Save the little bedchamber adjoining, the room they had entered was the only one in the house occupied by the octogenarian.

The room was scantily furnished—a stove, a deal table, a few rickety chairs, a lounge and a cupboard comprised nearly all the movables it contained. In the bedchamber was a high four-post bedstead, a bureau, which might have been as ancient as its owner, and a worn-out chest. The bed was covered

by a 'patchwork quilt of faded calico; the pillows, or rather the pillow, for there was but one, was of snowy whiteness, and contrasted strangely with the dingy walls.

Against the wall in the outer room a tallow candle was burning in an iron sconce, casting a sickly light over the scene.

The beautiful girl, whose varying fortunes we shall faithfully chronicle, had never before entered so cheerless an abode.

The humble tenantry of Silvermere, with whose ways of life her charities had made her familiar, were far in advance of this lone woman in material comforts.

Overcome by a sense of her own unhappy condition, the earl's daughter burst into a passion of tears.

"Don't cry so, dearie," coaxed the old woman, in a cracked voice; "if it's the ghosts you're afraid of you needn't be, for I've lived here six months now, and haven't been troubled with sight or sound of a solitary one. There's no such thing about, though I wouldn't say it to any one else, seeing the notion gives me my home rent free. Why, the people hereabouts would as soon think of running straight into the bottomless pool at the back there as coming near the haunted house."

The garrulous old woman hobbled off to prepare supper for her guests, and Mrs. Lyell, after removing her shawl and bonnet, sat down to watch the weeping girl, an expression of fiendish delight on her tawny face. Her evil heart had cause for joy. The only child and heiress of one she hated was in her power. Her own daughter would soon be securely installed in her place. Riches and honour were in store for the one, while for the other there could be only sorrow and bitter woe.

Old Adelaide's supper was ready at last—an not uninviting repast, consisting in part of fish and wild berries.

She had been so engrossed with her preparations for the meal that she scarcely had bent a glance towards her guests. As she invited them to the table she looked at Mrs. Lyell for the first time after the removal of her bonnet. She instantly hobbled forward, demanding:

"Your name, madam? Tell me your name."

"Hortense Lyell."

"I thought so."

The old woman extended her hand, while an expression of pleasant surprise lit up her sharp features.

"What can you know of me?" said Mrs. Lyell, eyeing her hostess suspiciously.

"I know this, that fifteen years ago you and I were neighbours—friends. You do not know me yet? Do you not remember the old woman who lived next door to you in the suburbs of Dover? I am Adelaide Grafton—Widow Grafton!"

"Ah!"

Mrs. Lyell looked wonderfully relieved. She gave her hand to the woman's grasp, cordially saying: "I am very glad indeed to meet with an old friend."

Then Mrs. Grafton turned to the pale, shrinking girl near the door. She had dried her tears, and was looking in an absent manner at the two women. "So this is your daughter, the little Griselda, or 'Grissy,' as we used to call her. Have you forgotten Granny Grafton, dearie? and how you used to drive the cow from the pasture for her to milk, always bringing your little tin cup with you for a draught fresh from the cow?"

She gave her wrinkled hand to the earl's daughter, who took it mechanically, scarcely heeding the old woman's words, so preoccupied was she with her own sorrowful thoughts.

That Lady Alloway, whom she loved and esteemed, had been foully murdered—as she believed—was a thing to be deeply deplored; but that she, the loved and loving, should be accused, and by the duke, too, of her murder, was enough to fill her mind with darkest gloom.

"But where is your son, Mrs. Grafton? Has he married and made a nest for himself, leaving you alone in your old age?"

Mrs. Lyell asked the question more from curiosity than sympathy with the lone widow.

Old Adelaide sighed, and tears fell over her wrinkled cheeks.

"He went away from me years ago, within the year after you went from Dover, and I have never seen or heard from him since. I stayed in the old place for years, hoping he would come back to me, but he never did."

The tender heart of the earl's daughter was touched with pity. She said:

"Your son would not know where to find you. Perhaps he is even now searching for you."

"That can't be, Grissy; I left a letter for him with one of the neighbours, telling him where to find me. I think he is dead; and if he is, our meeting will soon be, for I am getting very old."

For a few moments the form of old Adelaide trembled like a tree in the blast. When her emo-

tion had subsided she shuffled to the cupboard, thinking then only of her supper, which was getting cold, and produced therefrom a third plate, and a knife and fork.

She had changed her mind about standing to wait upon her guests, as she had at first intended, and for the sake of bygone times would make one at the table.

Mrs. Lyell and her victim took their places at the homely board side by side, the former making a hearty meal, the latter tasting not a particle of the food of which old Adelaide pressed her to partake.

The time passed quickly with the two elder women, occupied as it was by the reminiscences of the past, and the hour for retiring came.

It was decided that Mrs. Lyell should share the bed with old Adelaide, and a comfortable though by no means luxurious couch was prepared for the earl's daughter on the lounge. Taking a candle, the woman retired to the bedroom, and the sorrowing girl was left to herself. Partially disrobing, she crept into the improvised bed, but not until a tearful petition had ascended from her full heart to the throne of grace.

It was not surprising that she, accustomed as she was to every luxurious and elegant appointment, should fail to sleep in this desolate room, far from any other habitation, especially with such a weight of sorrow upon her mind. The clocks in Calais struck the hours of early morning before an uneasy slumber came to bear her away in dreams to Silvermere.

She was up and dressed when Mrs. Lyell, smiling and jubilant, made her appearance.

The widow had arisen an hour before them, and was out in the woods gathering faggots wherewith to cook breakfast.

"Mrs. Lyell," said the childlike girl, "I could not sleep all last night for thinking over what happened last evening. There are many things connected with this sad affair which I cannot understand."

"Well?"

Mrs. Lyell was smiling still, yet a demon was lurking in her eyes. The sun came in through a crevice in the shutter, which was tightly closed. Its beams fell upon the woman's sorrowful face, giving it still more satanic look. But the evil, glowering glances were unnoticed by the earl's daughter.

"Well?"

The woman repeated the monosyllabled inquiry. "I do not see how I came out of the landau—how I came under the tree at such a distance from the others of the party."

"Neither do I."

Mrs. Lyell made this pert reply with a suspicious toss of her head.

"What do you mean, Mrs. Lyell? and where was I when you first saw me?"

"I mean nothing, of course; and to be sure I suppose you innocent—at least of the intention to murder—or I could not in conscience seek to shield you from arrest. I was returning from a visit in the country to Calais, where I reside, when I saw the landau, which had previously passed me, standing still in the road with several brly men moving about it. I saw you spring from the carriage and run in the direction of the haunted house like a frightened hare. I approached you, and saw by the starlight that your face was ghastly pale; your eyes were staring wide open, but with a vacant expression. You ran till you came near the scrubby oak, when you fell. I picked you up—you looked so innocent and good I pitied you—and carried you under the tree out of sight. You know the rest."

The earl's daughter watched the wily woman with anxious eyes; a grayish pallor swept over her face. She arose, her form drooping like a blighted lily; her eyes were feverish and blazing like diamonds. An awful thought had taken possession of her. She spoke, and her voice was low and hollow.

"Mrs. Lyell, tell me truly, do you think it possible for one to commit an awful crime like that and still be unconscious of the deed?"

Mrs. Lyell was struck with a new idea.

"A lunatic might, surely; and so might one rendered temporarily insane by inhaling poisonous vapours."

The poor girl trembled in every joint. She fell back upon the lounge, gasping as if for breath.

Mrs. Lyell was inwardly delighted. From leading the earl's daughter to suppose herself accused of murder, she would actually cause her to think that, labouring under temporary derangement, she had really committed that awful crime. Approaching very near her side, she said, in a would-be soothing tone:

"Don't give yourself up to such accusing thoughts. People who are not in their right minds cannot be held accountable for their acts, whatever they may be. You are innocent, under the circumstances. If you killed—"

"Don't, Mrs. Lyell, don't—you will kill me!" piteously interrupted the earl's daughter; then, throwing off the weakness which had seized her

frame, she arose and walked the bare floor for a time in silence, the blue, sheeny silk of her dress trailing after her with a rustling sound altogether new to that drear room.

Mrs. Lyell watched the grief-laden face with concealed exultation. At length the sad voice murmured:

"You are mistaken, Mrs. Lyell—oh! so much mistaken; and Lord Alloway is deceived. I could never have committed that cruel deed and not recollect something about it. You say I came running towards you like a frightened hare. I cannot account for that, but I know—I feel—that I could not raise my hand in violence against dear Lady Alloway. The last that I can remember is that I was sitting beside the duchess, who was being rendered insensible by a gigantic ruffian. I must set out for Calais immediately. Papa is there—poor papa! who, perhaps, is forced to believe the dreadful tale. I must hasten to him, assert my innocence to him and the duke, and together they will clear my honourable name from this stain."

She arose as if to depart at once.

"Stay, my poor girl," said the crafty woman; "you will but injure your cause by this step. You are a suspected—nay, an accused murderer! You come on foot to Calais in unseemly guise! your outer garments gone! yourself out all night, no one knowing where! The verdict in every one's mind would be 'Guilty!' Better content yourself here while I go to your father and learn what the duke really saw, or what he thinks he saw you do. The real murderer may have been discovered; in that case, of course, your father will speedily come for you when he learns where you are."

This plausible reasoning won the earl's daughter, trustful and guileless as she was, to her enemy's plan.

It was agreed, therefore, [that Mrs. Lyell should be the one to visit Calais.

She purposely delayed her departure, however, till the sun was near the meridian, by which time, she felt assured, the little party in which she was so much interested would be on the way to England. When at length she stood in the dingy room ready for her walk, after many words of caution to her victim, she turned to her, saying, in an undertone, that the ears of old Adelaide might not catch the words:

"You have not told me who your father is, though you are sending me to him. But I know his name. I heard it last night when the duke was crying out against you. Had you been other than the daughter of Lord Walsingham I might have left you to the mercy of the law, though I confess your face won me at the first. But Lord Walsingham was once my benefactor; I have always felt greatly in his debt, and now I hope, by serving his daughter, even at the expense of my own ease, to liquidate that debt."

Then, kissing the hand of the earl's daughter in well-feigned respect, if not veneration, she set out on her errand. Walking with sturdy steps to Calais, she sought out the hotel wherein the Duke of Alloway's party, with Lord Walsingham, had passed the night.

After passing a short time within its walls she re-entered the street, with the sealed envelope Lady Valeria had left for her in charge of the servant, in her hand. From the hotel she went to the little inn where she, with Griselda and the Gabrons, had put up on landing from the steamer the previous day.

She called for a room, of which she took immediate possession. Here she tore open the envelope, and read with satisfaction the few words the pseudo-Valeria had written for her benefit. She greedily put the money in her purse, and dropped it in her pocket, after which she opened and read the two letters from Earl Walsingham to his daughter. She studied with care the formation of the letters and the style of expression.

Once she had herself been the recipient of a letter from Lord Walsingham, but in the heat of anger, which its perusal evoked, she had burned it to a cinder. How vividly the bold, clear penmanship before her recalled that letter to her mind, and perhaps tender thoughts came with it, for she leaned her head upon her hand for a moment, while a softened look came to her eyes.

But only for a moment did she thus give way to what might have been thoughts of happier days. She set her thin lips firmly together, and rang the bell for writing materials, and soon she was busy with the task she had set herself to perform.

At the end of two hours of uninterrupted labour she held in her hand a letter, whose moist seal bore the Walsingham crest. For years the seal with which she had stamped it had dangled as a useless ornament from the guard of her watch; which was an old one, and bore upon its worn sides the same device as the seal.

Collecting the waste paper, with which she had strewn the table, she put it with Lord Walsingham's letters, for which she had no longer any use,



[THE FORGED LETTER.]

into the grate, and, applying a lighted match, she watched the mass burn to ashes, then, turning away, she muttered:

"Now I have only to visit the establishment of some dealer in 'Ladies' ready-made clothing,' where I shall procure suitable garments for my too trustful charge, after which I am ready to return to the haunted house."

CHAPTER X.

The miserable have no other medicine
But only hope. *Shakespeare.*

AFTER the departure of Mrs. Lyell the sorrowing victim of a cruel plot grew superlatively lonely and despondent. A cloud had settled over her soul, silently warning her of days, perhaps months, of darkness yet to come.

The house afforded no books, over which she could while away the hours—there was no one to whom she could speak. She essayed once or twice to open a conversation with old Adelaide, but she seemed deafener than ever, and hobbled about, attending to her every-day duties as though she alone was in the house.

But the maiden found that her presence was not forgotten when she ventured out into the wooded glade for a change of scene and fresh air.

Leaving her work, the widow quietly followed her out, and kept the willowy, slow-moving figure continually under her eye.

Cunning Mrs. Lyell had taken the old woman aside and informed her that she wished her daughter kept strictly within the house, as she was subject to frequent aberrations of mind, and might wander off, or, what was worse, attempt her own life.

The truth was that Mrs. Lyell feared Lady Valeria might be seized with a fit of home-sickness, and, relying upon her entire innocence, proceed to the hotel in Calais to set herself right in the eyes of the duke, and of the world.

When she saw that a longer continuance of her walk would keep the widow from her duties, which she felt assured she had left by Mrs. Lyell's thoughtful request to see that no harm came to herself, Lady Valeria returned to the house.

She had scarcely seated herself on the threadbare cover of the lounge when Mrs. Lyell came in. This woman had once been an actress and had not forgotten how to simulate various emotions of the mind. Her countenance wore a look of deepest concern, mingled with pity. She sighed heavily as she laid aside her bonnet and shawl as if to prepare the poor girl—who feared to ask a question lest its

answer should be the death to her faint hopes—for the bad news of which she was the bearer.

The wretched girl sat on the lounge with clasped hands, which would tremble despite her.

"Speak, Mrs. Lyell. Tell me where is papa?"
"My poor girl, how shall I tell you? His lordship thought it best, under the circumstances, for him to return immediately to England. He started for Dover while I was in Calais."

"Gone—papa gone! and left me here alone?"
And she gave way to a copious shower of tears.

"Only for a short time, it is hoped, you will have to remain from home. Your poor father is bowed down with grief, but I had little difficulty in impressing him with a belief in your innocence—at least, of an intentional murder. He hopes to prove your perfect innocence by producing the real murderer. But I was quite forgetting his lordship's letter."

The maiden eagerly reached forth her tear-wet hand for the precious missive, which was to assure her of her father's unbounded faith in her.

The letter ran as follows:

"My darling child,—Alas! that you are in so great a strait—and alone. I would come to you at once did I not hope that by returning immediately to London I may be able to discover the real perpetrator of the dastardly deed of which his grace accuses you. In spite of my own sorrow, my heart goes out in sympathy for the poor duke. The body of the duchess was sent on to London this morning. The duke, I hear, avows his determination of bringing you to justice. He must have been labouring under a phantasm produced by the chloroform which he admits he inhaled. He swears that he saw you plunge a glittering blade in the breast of his wife, but of course this will all be made clear when the murderer is found:

"Do not give way to despair, my pet, though you may not often hear from me, I shall be working earnestly to clear up this dark mystery which has thrown so sombre a shadow over so many hearts."

"Be patient, my child. I am glad to know that you have found so excellent a friend and protector as Mrs. Lyell. I shall give myself to the work before me with more fortitude since I know that you are in such good care. I cannot send you any portion of your wardrobe without exciting suspicion, but Mrs. Lyell has offered to procure for you such articles of apparel as you may need."

"She has with great self-sacrifice consented to remove with you from this locality, where you are at any time liable to be discovered and arrested. Do not feel frightened at that ugly word, pet, for if the

worst come to the worst I hope to be able to procure your acquittal."

"One thing more I have to write. It is a matter of the greatest importance that you change your name. Pass under an assumed one while you are forced to remain in exile. I would suggest that you pass for the daughter of your kind benefactress, through whom alone I can expect to hear from you. That you may be speedily restored to my arms is the constant prayer of your loving but disconsolate father,"

HUGH BYERLY.

The maiden re-folded the letter with tremulous fingers. Her eyes were tearless now, but the fires of an awful woe looked from their gloomy depths. Her bosom heaved and fell with a tumult of grief and anguish. Absolute despair was brooding over her soul. The stony-hearted Mrs. Lyell glided from her corner, and came and laid her hand upon the bowed head.

"Cheer up, my dear. All will soon be well. Lord Walsingham will leave no stone unturned till your name is cleared, and yourself restored to him. In the meantime we have work to do. I am your friend. Let me know what his lordship advises."

The earl's daughter gave the letter into Mrs. Lyell's hands in silence. Her heart was too full for speech. Mrs. Lyell made a pretence of reading the letter, though her mind was not upon it. She watched the maiden furtively, and was convinced that she had not the slightest suspicion but that her father had penned the letter. She handed it back at length, saying:

"Your father is wise. We must remove from here. We will go to Scotland as soon as you feel able to undertake the journey. I fear you will mourn yourself ill. You are beginning to droop already, like a broken lily."

The maiden answered, with stony resignation:

"I am ready to go at any time."
"His lordship rightly suggests that you ought to change your name. He thinks it will be as well for you to pass as my daughter—be simply Griselda Lyell. What do you say?"

"Since it is papa's wish, you may call me Griselda."

What a demoniac smile curled the lips of Mrs. Lyell as she turned away from the maiden, who was now completely in her power, to take from a heavy satchel the garments she had purchased for her use.

The noonday sun next day looked down upon the lonely haunted house, from beneath whose roof an innocent maiden had been deluded to a voluntary prison—perhaps to death.

(To be continued.)



[AMY AND THE DYING DEER.]

AMY ROBSART.

BY BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG.

Author of "Heart's Content," "Evander," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

My death and life.

My bane and antidote, are both before me.

"Your majesty is the mother of your people. You are wedded to England and her interest—that I know, all that I feel," exclaimed Leicester, with a tender inflection in his voice. "Yet, did I not lack hardihood to put my thoughts in words, I would dare to say that which for many long months has been in my heart's deep recesses. Oh, gracious madame, if I dared—"

"Enough, Dudley," hastily interrupted the queen. "This is neither the time nor the place to give full scope to such a conversation as you would force upon me. Do not mistake me. I am not offended with you. Your boldness flatters me, for I do verily believe that you are honest, unswerving, and true-hearted. Never had queen so devoted a subject. I will not think ambition moves thee, for I have advanced you high above all others. I thank you for the affection you have expressed towards me; but—but I fear it cannot be. I must have time for reflection. No, no; you must not repeat this. England requires all my care and attention. I must live for our country. It cannot be. What would those of my counsellors say who are the pillars of my throne? We must not be hasty. Another time, Dudley; leave me now."

Elizabeth spoke with an agitation very unusual with her, for she generally had a certain boldness and readiness of speech which well became her station.

"Permit me to wait here, gracious madame," answered the earl. "Your ladies are in attendance at a short distance, and have been joined by some of your courtiers, costumed for the chase."

There was a momentary pause, during which the queen recovered herself from the unwonted emotion into which she had been plunged. Then she replaced herself again by the earl's side and said, shortly:

"We will rejoin them."

"I trust your majesty does not blame me for—"

"No, no. I have told you that you have given me no offence. My faith in your devotion to my person is the more assured," the queen answered, quickly.

Amy had been an attentive listener to this conversation, and her first impulse, as she heard their footsteps grate upon the gravel, was to rush out and

claim the queen's protection; but she thought of her promise to her husband and held back. Indeed, it is doubtful if at that moment her strength would have supported her. She was pale as death; her slender frame trembled, and she could scarce bear herself upright. The excitement of the preceding three days, her restless night, and the dialogue of which she had been an unintentional hearer, all tended to unnerve her.

She remained in the grotto, like one in a trance, for some time, until she was recalled to herself and a sense of her miserable position and unfriended state by the baying of the hounds, the shouts of the grooms and prickers, and the voices of those who were to take part in the great chase arranged for the day.

These sounds faded away in the distance, and Amy rose to depart from the sanctuary in which she had taken refuge. The gardens of the castle were once more deserted, and, by a species of instinct, she turned her steps in the direction of the woodland where she had seen the deer cropping the rich green grass.

As the fresh air fanned her pale cheek she became stronger, and, soon reaching the chase, she wandered listlessly over hill and dale, hoping to meet some one in whom she could place trust and reliance, with a view to gaining an interview with Leicester. It was within the bounds of possibility that she would meet the royal party, and then recognising her, she knew that her husband must speak to and give her relief from her doubt and misery, though she feared he would be angry at her temerity in leaving Cammar and seeking him at Kenilworth.

She was not so brave as she had been before the trying ordeal which she had lately gone through. The iron of misfortune began to enter into her soul; want of proper rest and food enfeebled her body and mind, while carking care made her at times feel like one distraught.

At length, fatigued by the heat of the sun and the length of her stroll, she sat down upon a woody knoll in front of a bosky dell, the underwood of which was very thick, and around which grew flowers of the wood, such as bluebells, cowslips, violets, cuckoo-flowers, and primroses.

Scarcely knowing what she did, she gathered a quantity of these pretty flowers, and laying them in her lap, wove them into a garland, which she put upon her head and twined in with her fair, flowing hair.

Suddenly a hunted deer, sorely wounded by the shaft of some hunter, though unpursued, staggered towards her, evidently intending to harbour in the dell behind.

But its strength was not equal to the effort, and the poor creature fell almost in her embrace, and, raising its liquid eyes to hers, seemed to utter a mute appeal for succour and protection.

It was sorely hurt, and its glassy stare showed her that death was fast coming on to end its sufferings. Blood trickled from a wound in its side, and, with a portion of her dress, she endeavoured to staunch the flow, the animal licking her hand the while as if in thankfulness for her kind treatment.

"Poor deer!" murmured Amy, her own eyes filling with tears as she gazed at the beautiful creature whose life had been sacrificed to the cruel lust of sport, which was as fashionable then as now. "How much are our conditions alike! You and I are chivied hither and thither, though how long it will be before I receive my death-blow the fates alone can tell!"

It was in vain that she endeavoured to arrest the progress of death; the injury received by the deer was mortal. Still she held it in her arms, unheeding of the ruby fluid which ensanguined her, and she was all unconscious of the approach of a small party, so engrossed was she with her Samaritan work.

A voice falling upon her ears startled her. She had heard that voice in the morning. It was the queen's.

"Bid them leave us here, Dudley," she exclaimed. "I am fatigued and would rest. Methinks this is a pretty spot enough. I will dismount and luxuriate in the pleasant shade."

"Your grace could not have chosen a better," answered the Earl of Leicester. "If I may beg to be excused for a moment I will give orders to Sir Richard Varney, who will instruct the grooms. Will it please you for your ladies to wait here, or accompany the chase with the others? There are some valiant gentlemen and knights, notably Sir Walter Raleigh, who it seems would fain whet their spurs a little more."

"Stay not the chase for me," answered Elizabeth, who, when talking to the earl, usually spoke unceremoniously. "Let them all use their pleasure."

So saying, she alighted from her horse with Leicester's assistance, and walked towards the place where Amy was sitting, ambushed by a few small shrubs and trees, the head of the wounded deer lying in her lap, and herself wondering whether she had better tarry or fly.

"No," she said, to herself, "I will hold my ground. If it is Elizabeth, as I opine, since Dudley called her 'grace,' I will throw myself on her protection. I cannot endure this suspense much longer—"

and yet what shall I say—what do? Oh, that I had some one to guide me in this crisis!"

Meanwhile the earl went to give some orders to Varney, and to speak to those ladies and gentlemen immediately in the queen's train and in attendance upon her, the majority of whom preferred to remain with her majesty, as the heat of the day was making itself felt, and the sun was already riding high in the heavens.

Elizabeth, having dismounted, walked straight to the spot where Amy was, as it were, in hiding; her appearance was picturesque, a little too refined for a gipsy, and not quite in keeping with the character of a strolling player.

Being a healthy, robust country girl when at Lidcote, and her cheeks a trifle too full and rosy to be in accordance with the standard of beauty set up by the court ladies, her pallor, if anything, rendered her the more interesting, and certainly she was very lovely as she sat amidst the flowers and the ferns, the wind playing wantonly with her hair, crowned with its floral wreath, her face expressive of pity for the fawn at her feet.

The queen stopped short as she turned the corner of a bush and beheld this strange apparition, and Amy, beholding her majesty, rose to her feet, standing in an attitude of respectful attention, though she evidently stood in awe of England's virgin queen, whose fame was world-wide, whose virtues were in every one's mouth, and whose temper was well known to be as fiery as that of her Tudor father.

"Whom have we here?" exclaimed Elizabeth, scrutinising her closely. "Is there some classic allusion in thy appearance? We have not forgotten our mythology, though we fail to recognise anything apt in thee. Actæon? Diana? No; we must confess ourselves in fault, and turn to Leicester or to Raleigh to instruct us in this new surprise."

"Madame," rejoined Amy, "I am a poor, forlorn creature, sadly needing your protection, or, failing that—"

"Failing that!" repeated the queen, interrupting her. "Methinks you are somewhat bold to accost us thus; but perhaps you do not know who we are."

"If I mistake not you are Elizabeth of England," rejoined Amy, casting down her eyes.

"By Heaven!" cried the queen, "this is incomprehensible. You know us, and yet you venture to say that you, needing protection, as we suppose in a righteous cause, will not obtain it when pleading your case before our proper person. If you deserve justice and have suffered wrong, it is time you should know that none in this realm, however powerful, can act in defiance of law with impunity. But finish your sentence; we were over hasty."

Amy was abashed at the violence with which the queen spoke, and said nothing.

"Come, come! must we needs jog your memory, woman?" continued Elizabeth. "You claimed our protection, but seemed to fear that some power would step in to frustrate our good offices on your behalf. Failing that," you said. Well, now, supposing that our gracious countenance were turned from you, to whom would you apply?"

"To the Earl of Leicester, madame," rejoined Amy.

"This is somewhat bold. To the Earl of Leicester, say you? and why to the Earl of Leicester?" said the queen, bending her searching gaze upon her, while a dark frown gathered on her brow.

Amy's brain began to reel. She saw it would have been better if she had said nothing and allowed her majesty to think that she was some poor wail or stray belonging to the company of mummers, who had come to the great show in the Midlands. There was danger to herself—danger to her husband in her present position, and she hung down her head and remained silent.

"Art dumb?" cried Elizabeth, who was rapidly growing angry. "By the soul of our father! I will know more! Thou art set on to this. The Earl of Leicester is one of our most trusted councillors, and his name should not be spoken lightly by such as thee!"

These words brought an indignant flush to Amy's cheek. Her womanly pride would not allow her to remain silent any longer. Her blood coursed quickly through her veins. Her honour was attacked, and she determined to vindicate it.

With a quiet dignity, which the queen at once recognised, she said:

"Your grace is in the wrong to speak thus harshly to me. I am the daughter of Sir Hugh Robsart, of Lidcote Hall. If not of a more exalted rank, I yet deserve milder treatment at your hands."

The cloud vanished at once from Elizabeth's face, and her irate aspect changed to one of intense curiosity in a moment.

"Tressilian may have had something to say after all," she muttered. "The certificates were false. I have been played with in this matter. There is more

here than appears upon the surface, but those who have dared to trifle with me shall suffer dearly for this."

"Speak fearlessly," she added, aloud. "Your appearance here in this strange guise misled us—we are sorry for having wounded you in anything we have said. Moreover, we thought you in another place. Speak Mistress—or Lady Varney, as we should call you, though, perhaps, you do not know that we have been graciously pleased to knight your husband."

"Varney!" repeated Amy, with every symptom of horror and disgust. "Oh, do not, I beseech you, apply that name to me. Your majesty must have been strangely misled."

"Who are you then, if not the wife of Sir Richard Varney?" "Scdath, minion, we will have nothing kept back!" cried the queen, losing her patience once more. "You mentioned the Earl of Leicester but now; what know you of him or he of you?"

At this juncture the Earl of Leicester made his appearance, having spoken to Varney. He heard his name pronounced, and, without noticing Amy, stepped boldly forward, saying:

"Did your majesty call for me?"

"Ay, my lord," answered Elizabeth, sternly; "you have arrived at a most opportune juncture. Look upon this woman and tell us what you know about her."

Leicester now looked in Amy's direction, following the course of the queen's extended arm. His eyes met those of his countess and he stood as one petrified. Amy at Kenilworth! Amy in fantastic attire, looking more like a wild bedlamite than a rational being! Amy in the queen's presence, when he thought her safely bestowed at Cumnor under the parental care of Anthony Foster!

His blood froze in his veins. What had she said already? Had she compromised him, and ruined his fortunes by a few rash words? He felt a craving rise in his heart to rush upon and carry her to the lowest dungeon his castle contained, where in silence and darkness she might repent her disobedience.

"Well, my lord," said Elizabeth, whose voice trembled with suppressed passion. "You seem to be over long in effecting a recognition with this hussey."

"Amy!" ejaculated the earl.

"That much we know," continued the queen. "She has said that she is the daughter of Sir Hugh Robsart. Our ignorance must be further enlightened. If you have deceived us, and this woman is ought to thee, by the Heaven above us! It would have been better hadst thou never been born. Thy father perished on the scaffold, and though we have made thee what thou art, we can undo our work, and another Dudley may die the death of a traitor!"

Thoroughly alarmed at this threat, Amy, full of love for her husband, and apprehensive that she had done him some harm, put her hands together, and said, in piteous accents:

"Oh! madame, what have I done that you should attack the innocent? The Earl of Leicester knows nothing of my wrongs. If I have to complain it is not of him."

"Of whom then?" demanded Elizabeth.

"Of Varney."

The queen looked from the earl to the countess and back again.

Leicester preserved a dogged silence, scarcely knowing which way to turn to extricate himself from the dilemma in which he was placed.

It was the most anxious and terrible moment of his life.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Alas! how oft does goodness wound itself,
And sweet affection prove the spring of woe!

Oh, thou pale orb, that silent shines,
While care-untroubled mortals sleep!
Thou seest a wretch that inly pines,
And wanders here to wail and weep!
With woe I nightly vigils keep,
Beneath thy wan, unwarmed beam;
And mourn, in lamentation deep,
How life and love are all a dream.

"My lord!" exclaimed Elizabeth, stamping her foot imperiously on the ground; "you are not usually such a laggard in your speech. Disclose all you know respecting this daughter of Sir Hugh Robsart! We will be fully informed of this mystery."

Amy sank on her knees before the queen, sobbing as if her heart would break, and crying:

"Spare him, gracious madame. He is honour itself. I scarcely know what I say. My mind is not strong to-day. I claimed your majesty's protection because I have wrongs, but the Earl of Leicester knows nothing of them. It is not he."

"Let Varney be called!" exclaimed the queen, looking round.

A small group of courtiers, having dismounted from their horses, were standing within a little distance. They could see that something extraordinary was

taking place, though they could not overhear what was said.

Among them were Lord Shrewsbury, the Marshal of England; and Lord Hunsdon, the Captain Commandant of the band of Gentlemen Pensioners—a rough old noble, related to the Boleyns, and so to the queen herself in a remote degree.

"My Lord of Shrewsbury," continued the queen, raising her voice, "and you, cousin Hunsdon—come near."

Fortunately for his noble patron, Varney heard this order given, and as the noblemen addressed approached the royal person he strained his eyesight to see what was proceeding, and, to his amazement, beheld Amy.

"What!" he said to himself, with intense bitterness; "is that marplot here? The she-wolf! I had not expected this; but perhaps it is as well as it is, though I shall need all my courage and invention at this crisis."

He ran forward, exhibiting signs of distress, astonishment, and confusion. Lords Shrewsbury and Hunsdon had arrived just before him.

"What is your majesty's pleasure with us?" asked Shrewsbury.

"Seek us out Sir Richard Varney, my lord," answered the queen; "he should be somewhere near at hand. We may require your services in another direction presently," she added, with a malignant glance at Leicester.

Turning to Hunsdon, she said, in a whisper: "Are your gentlemen pensioners within call, cousin? We fear some treason lurks here."

"Heaven help us, your majesty!" rejoined the old peer. "Say not so. My gentlemen are not within hail, but they could soon be assembled. Surely your grace mistakes!"

"Wait, we shall see," returned the queen, in the same low and significant tone.

The Earl of Leicester's pride could not brook the position in which he found himself placed, and, finding that the earth would not open and swallow him up, and that the aged trees around would not fall and overwhelm him, he determined to vindicate his honour, sacrifice his court prospects, let ambition take its chance, and avow his marriage.

He had already stepped forward to raise Amy from her kneeling position and inform the queen that the lady before her was his wife, when Varney, destined to be his evil genius, rushed into the presence, and sank on one knee before Elizabeth.

"Here is the man your majesty spoke of—Sir Richard Varney, my Lord of Leicester's master of the horse, if I am not grievously mistaken," exclaimed Lord Shrewsbury.

"I trust your majesty's mind has not been poisoned by any malicious tales!" exclaimed Varney, "though I fear the worst. A post arrived this morning to inform me of this lady's escape from Cumnor. May it please you to order her to be delivered into my safe keeping?"

"No, it does not please us!" rejoined Elizabeth.

"Oh, madame! do with me as you will, but save me from that base man!" cried Amy, with the same imploring look. "He has hitherto been my ruin. I know not whether the future will make amends for the present and the past, but this I know, that I owe all my misery to that man. Were it not for him I should not now be here in the wretched plight in which you see me—I, who have a right to hold myself as proudly as any in the fair company who revel now at Kenilworth. Give me not up to him, madame! If it is necessary that I should be put under any restraint, your grace can find a prison for me, until—until this labyrinth is threaded to the end!"

"Poor thing," said Varney, with an affection of deep sympathy, "she knows not what she says or does. She cannot even express her wrongs, as she calls them, in intelligible language."

"You are strangely excited to-day, child!" exclaimed Elizabeth, more kindly than she had hitherto spoken to her; "and we deem it best to remit you to the castle, where our own Doctor Masters can attend upon you; by his report we will guide ourselves."

"I thank your majesty," said Varney, approaching Amy, and seizing rather than taking her hand, while he continued:

"Come, madam," adding, in a whisper, "you must speak of me with less dislike if you would save the Earl of Leicester. Your folly has brought him to the brink of ruin. For Heaven's sake! think of it."

"What is that you are saying to the girl?" cried the queen, quickly. "We will have no reason-giving. It seems to us we have been somewhat trifled with already. Let go her hand, Sir Richard. We hold her as she were a state prisoner for the nonce, and none shall have speech of her."

"I thought no harm, gracious madame, in speaking to my wife," said Varney, boldly.

Thinking of her husband's danger, Amy did not make any reply, nor did she seek to disengage his hand, though she would rather have touched the fang of a viper.

"See, your majesty," continued Varney, "my presence has somewhat calmed her. It is but when the fit is on her that she indulges in these vagaries."

"Would you make your wife out mad?" asked the queen. "Well, well, she seems distraught indeed. Masters shall visit her; he is a skilful leech, and, as we said before, by his opinion shall our future course be steered in this matter. My Lord of Shrewsbury, favour us by seeing this wayward lady to the castle. Have her safely bestowed, so that no one but Doctor Masters have access to her, though we would have her treated generously, and not with the harshness of an offender."

Lord Shrewsbury bowed and gave his arm to Amy, who had with her eyes sought the face of Leicester. It was there she had hoped to find guidance, but she met with nothing but a stony, impassive stare. Then, with a sigh so profound that it appeared to be dragged from her heart, she turned with tottering steps and accompanied her conductor to the entrance to the castle garden.

"Bear up, my pretty; bear up, child," said Lord Shrewsbury, in gentle accents. "No one will do thee any harm. The queen is goodness itself, but she smells some plot in this, and it is dangerous to cross her humour."

"Is that the reason, sir, why the Earl of Leicester did not speak?" queried Amy.

"What could he say, dear?" answered the kind old lord; "as it seems to me, there is some quarrel between you and your husband, this same Varney, whom the queen made a knight yesterday, and your head being a little weak—do you see?"

"Pray say no more to me," interrupted the countess, bewildered. "I must have time to think. Perhaps he will come to me while I am alone and explain all this which seems so strange. There may be some reason—some weighty reason—why he should remain silent. The attitude of the queen was threatening. I cannot see through these intrigues; I was not brought up to a court life. It is all strange to me. I am like one wandering in a new world."

"Be of good cheer, sweetheart. No harm can come to you," said Shrewsbury, who was rather embarrassed with his charge.

Amy shook her head, and during the remainder of their walk she did not say a word, though the peer frequently spoke to her in tones of encouragement.

She was placed in an apartment sumptuously furnished and provided with refreshments of various kinds, but her appetite failed her, and she could not take anything more than a piece of bread and a glass of water, after which slender fare she threw herself down upon a couch, and, with burning eyes, tried to think of what she ought to do, and forecast that which would happen to her.

She was positive in her determination to say no more to compromise the Earl of Leicester, even if the queen herself interrogated her. The love she had always entertained for the earl came to her aid. She knew, too, that he loved her. Their courtship, his frequent interviews with her at Cumnor, his letters, all proved it, and she concluded that there must be some very potent argument at work in his mind to prevent his acknowledging her.

These letters of which we speak, couched in glowing terms of ardent love, rested in her bosom at that very moment, tied with a tress of her own lovely hair.

Nothing could have been easier than for her to vindicate her position, for she could have thrown them on the ground before the queen, and, giving them as her credentials, bid her recognise her as the Countess of Leicester and her hostess.

But Amy's nature was too simple and confiding, and her love for the earl too sincere to allow her to do anything of this sort. She would not harm her husband.

"When this Doctor Masters comes," she said to herself, "I will allow him to suppose that I am Mistress Varney."—she shuddered as she pronounced the name—"that is to say, I will not state the fact, but he may make the assertion and draw what inference he likes from my silence. Dudley loves me too well to allow me to suffer long. I fear that I have acted wrongly in coming from Cumnor without his permission. I saw his eagle eyes bent upon me, and I read annoyance in his glance. He does not know why I fled. It is not in his knowledge that they practised on my life. Ah, well! Truly my nurse used to say that they who love must suffer. Woe is me! woe is me!"

We must now go back to the spot where we left Elizabeth, whose temper became calmer when the countess had gone away with Lord Shrewsbury. Grand and majestic as she was herself, she could not feel any admiration for the soft and melting beauty

of Amy—she was so fragile, so young, so fair, so apparently innocent; and though jealousy had taken a hold of her mind for a moment, she, on brief reflection, dismissed the green monster, thinking Amy too insignificant for such a nobleman as Leicester.

"The fowler who could snare the eagle stoops to not the linnets," she muttered.

When the countess was gone Varney felt that he could speak plainly—the more so as the few bold words he had uttered in the countess's presence were uncontradicted by her.

"Will your grace allow me to speak?" he exclaimed. Receiving a gracious nod from the queen to intimate her assent, he went on: "I did not dare—that is, my pride prevented me from having the nature of my unfortunate wife's disorder inserted in the certificates which I had the honour to lay before your majesty. Her brain is a little affected, though I hope the malady is not incurable. She is of a weak nature, and when she heard that her father, Sir Hugh Robsart, and Master Tresillian suffered because she had left them in uncertainty as to her fate, she grew melancholy. I said nothing to my noble patron for some time of what I had done, and this caused me to keep my wife shut up in the house of my friend, Mr. Anthony Foster, for I knew that the Earl of Leicester would be the first to condemn rash conduct in any officer of his."

Every time Varney uttered the words 'my wife' they went through Leicester's heart like a stab.

"This is sad indeed," observed Elizabeth, after a reflective pause, and speaking in a tone which showed that she was entirely deceived by Varney's specious representations. "It would have been best, however, if you had been perfectly open and straightforward in the first instance. You have acted in the shade, Sir Richard Varney, throughout. First of all, you steal the girl from her lover and her father; you take her no one knows whither; you shut her up in an ancient and gloomy house with ascetics; you seldom see her; the girl regrets the step she has taken; her mind becomes disordered, and she fancies she hates the one whom she once imagined she loved with all her heart and soul, as every true woman should love the man to whom she gives her hand in marriage."

Saying this, the queen stole a glance at the countenance of the Earl of Leicester, which was less gloomy and impassive than it had been.

He now saw a means of exit out of his difficulty, and breathed more freely since the removal of his countess and the apparently favourable turn which the conversation had taken.

There was nevertheless a certain haughtiness in his demeanour which became so powerful a noble, and there was less of servility in his tone than usual when he exclaimed:

"Will it please your majesty to partake of such poor hospitality as my fellows can offer you thus far from the castle? They have refreshments with them, and await my orders."

"Let them bring what they will," replied the queen. "We are entirely in your hands, my lord. It seems to us that the guest should be the last to command. Come, come, treat us as a commoner if you will, my lord, provided you are not offended at our hasty speech just now."

"Your majesty must always be the brightest star in the firmament of Heaven, as you are the most dazzling in the galaxy of beauty," answered Leicester.

"It would be as impossible for the sun to offend the grateful earth he nourishes with his warmth as for your majesty to say aught to me that I could take amiss."

"You are a flatterer, my lord, and indulge in the extravagant phrases of the poets who adorn our reign. We are not finding fault with you; but adulation has its limits. It is folly to compare us with the sun, for we are all earthworms in comparison with the heavenly bodies," answered the queen.

"At least your grace will acquit me of—"

"Do not say anything further," interrupted Elizabeth. "The unhappy episode of which Sir Hugh Robsart's daughter has been the centre shall not interrupt those festivities which you have so carefully prepared for our reception. We were over-hasty, methinks, my lord. You would not have your sovereign say more."

"You are too good, madame," hastily replied Leicester. "If my master of the horse is to blame, and you decide that he is after further investigation, I will instantly dismiss him from my service. Any further punishment that your grace may choose to name—"

"Let the matter rest," answered the queen, in her authoritative manner.

Leicester bowed, and the servants happily came forward with the refreshments that had been ordered.

Lord Hunsdon, Lady Rutland, and others approached, and what we call in these modern days a picnic took place, which was agreeable to all those who took part in it except the Earl of Leicester, the founder of the feast, who felt as if each morsel he ate

would choke him, and whose thoughts were with his countess, though he was obliged by courtesy and his interest to speak smoothly with the queen and those around him.

CHAPTER XXX.

There's naethin' like the honest happy!
Whaer'll ye'er see men see happy;

Or women sonsie, saft an' sappy.

"T'ween morn an' morn,

As them wha like to taste the drappie

In glass or horn?

I've seen me daez't upon a time;

I scarce could wink or see a stymie;

Just as hauf muchkin does me prime.

Ought less is little,

Then back I rattle on the rhyme

As gleg's a whittle!

THE day passed without any further disturbance.

The queen resumed her good temper, and Leicester endeavoured to assume the serenity which as a rule characterised him; but he wore a mask, his face was smiling in hollow mockery of his woe, for he could not tell how the untoward affair of the morning would go. The storm had swept away for a time, yet who could tell when it would break out again, and how soon the swift lightning might scathe him?

Tresillian did not emerge from his chamber during the whole day.

"I cannot tell what ails him," said Sir Walter Raleigh—who had paid him several visits—speaking to Captain Blount. "He mopes like an owl, and has no relish for any of the sports that are toward."

"Ah!" replied Blount, with a sigh, as if recalling some episode of his early years, "you know not what it is to be in love."

"Do I not?" cried Raleigh, laughing. "Why, man, I fall in and out of love a dozen times in a year. I am Cupid's butt; he is overlastingly shooting at me. It is, as it were, going on from Genesis to Revelations. I am stuck full of the wayward child's arrows now."

"The darts do not penetrate far. It is but the epidermis of your heart they touch," answered Blount. "Mark me, Walter—mark me, lad, your time has yet to come, and we shall have thee mawking and writing sonnets to your lady's eyebrow. But, as for Tresillian, I fear me he will go melancholy mad."

"I know not," exclaimed Raleigh. "His manner is strange, and he says repeatedly that he must wait till night, as if he then contemplated some hasty or important act."

"I would have him watched."

"His man is constantly with him or within call, for he is tetchy and does not like to be intruded on," Raleigh replied.

The man of whom he spoke was Barfoot, who had been in attendance on his master since he awoke at mid-day. He had not been able to find the letter, nor did he trouble himself much about its loss now, as he had deceived Tresillian, and the matter so far was at rest.

Indeed, he could think of little but revenge for the blanketing he had been given at Dick Whistler's instigation. His bones were sore, and his head went dizzy when he recalled the circumstances of his ignominious tossing.

Being in the base court, looking round for one of the domestics of the castle, of whom he wished to order some wine for Tresillian, the latter having expressed a wish for some cool burgundy, he beheld his tormentor.

Dick had, as usual, been imbibing—strictly speaking he had not been sober since his entry into the castle, and having nothing particular to do but enjoy himself after his own fashion and make merry with the others, he did not hang back when a comrade or a chance acquaintance asked him to pledge him.

Seeing the state he was in, Barfoot mustered up sufficient courage to strike him on the back pretty heavily with a quarter-staff, with which he had contrived to arm himself in expectation of just such an encounter.

"Now I have you alone, and without your myrmidons!" exclaimed Barfoot, "I'll have my revenge for the slight you put upon me yester e'en."

And he repeated the blow, which considerably sobered Dick, who put his back against the wall, and, laying his hand on his sword, which he in vain attempted to draw, said, looking contemptuously at his assailant:

"Dost dare to assault Gentleman Dick Whistler, the esquire of Sir Richard Varney? Away, thou one-sided, ragged knave, away!"

"I have no intention of striking you again," said Barfoot, rather alarmed at his ferocious aspect and the abusive language he made use of. "I did but wish to appease my wounded honour, which is done by putting the indignity of a blow on you, that being, I take it, sweeter revenge than a greater amount of punishment."

"It shall be washed out in blood," answered Dick. "A plague take the sword! It was not wout to

stick thus in the scabbard when I fought in the Low Countries and made the Saracen flee! No, not the Saracen. I am wrong in my history. 'Oons! who was it I did fight against?"

"Methinks your inventive faculty fails you, and if you fought at all—" began Barfoot, emboldened by Dick's evident bewilderment; but the sound of Barfoot's voice was enough to recall Dick's wandering fury to the object upon which it had already been partially expended.

"What! are you there still, you son and heir of a beggar?" cried Dick, with his accustomed selections from his choice vocabulary of abuse. "Take hence thy epileptic visage! Your fortune has grown out of heels. You are no fit mate for such a house within this castle. Out, detested groom—vile slave!"

"By the Mass! Master Whistler, I take leave to say that I am as good as you are," replied Barfoot, growing angry. "I cannot draw a cart, nor eat hay; but man's work—that is to say, such as man should do—I will perform with any one. Why will you make a mutiny in the precincts of the castle? 'Tis a punishable offence. Od rabbit it, you treat me like a mere codsheld!"

"It waxes late. I'll have no further prate with thee," said Dick. "The time will come when vengeance shall claim its own! The peace must be kept; thou hast said well; but we shall meet. Reflect on that and tremble!"

So saying he passed on, walking irregularly, and only keeping erect by an effort. Barfoot felt much relieved by this encounter, and rose considerably in his own estimation, though had Dick Whistler been sober he would not have fared so well.

As he returned to retrace his steps he beheld Will Rudge, who, beckoning to him, exclaimed:

"I have discovered your secret friend, Jack, and know now who your sister is."

"Say you so? Then you are more clever than I gave thee credit for being," answered Barfoot. "What dost thou know?"

Rudge related how he had gone out to the chase in the morning with the prickers and grooms, and after some hard work he drank a deep draught of ale, and, feeling fatigued, threw himself down in the shelter of a thicket to rest, where none could see him.

While thus hidden he saw Amy come from the castle gardens and sit down near him. Presently came the queen and the Earl of Leicester, the whole of the conversation that took place being overheard by the listener.

"So," he concluded, "she is the daughter of Sir Hugh Robarts, of Lidcote Hall, and the wife of Sir Richard Varney as the queen thinks, though I have my doubts of it. Having surprised your secret, Jack, I will try if I cannot find out what remains. There is something strange and unnatural being enacted before our eyes, and I will unravel it, if chance stands my friend."

"Art mad?" exclaimed Barfoot, staring at him in amazement. "Bothink you, it is dangerous to meddle in the affairs of the rich and great."

"Then why did you do so? Faith! if the cobbler should not go beyond his last, you have strayed farther than you had any warrant for," rejoined Rudge. "No, no, you have not the head for intrigue; but if I do not turn an honest penny out of this, call me fool."

They parted, and Barfoot, shaking his head, bled him to his master, thinking the news he had to relate would be acceptable to him.

Tresillian had just received the wine which he had himself ordered, as Barfoot was so long gone in fetching it, and a deep draught had so revived his flagging energy that he was pacing the room impatiently.

"The time draws near," he muttered, looking at a dial in the court. "I will to her majesty, and lay the whole case before her. Woe to those who have trifled with her."

"News, sir, news!" exclaimed Barfoot, on entering. "Miss Amy has broken from her chamber and had an audience of the queen."

"What sayest thou?" cried Tresillian. "On whose authority hast thou this?"

Barfoot related his interview with Will Rudge, and garnished his story with some slight exaggerations of his own inventing.

"I am glad of this; now the truth will out. Thou art an honest fellow," said Tresillian. "Amy will relate all to Doctor Masters. We shall have an end of this mystery that has perplexed us, and Amy can take that position, whatever it may be, to which she is entitled. Sir Hugh will have his eyes gladdened with a sight of his erring daughter again, for if she is the wife of Varney she is a lady by rank, and he must treat her better than he hitherto seems to have done."

He spoke hurriedly and excitedly, and, bidding Barfoot brush the dust off his hose, he arranged his dress and hurried to the great hall to have speech of

some of his friends, and learn the full importance of what had occurred.

It was near sunset before the Earl of Leicester could withdraw into the privacy of his own apartments.

He at once sent for Varney, who promptly answered the summons.

"Well," he exclaimed, "the mine has been sprung, but the explosion has not harmed us so much as I anticipated. Why did you not warn me of the escape of the countess? I should have been better prepared for the scene had I known she was at large."

"I did not know it myself, my lord," answered Varney, dissembling; "though a messenger arrived this morning from Anthony Foster to advise me of the fact. Being in attendance upon you at the chase, I did not see him until my return. All now depends upon the countess. If she will listen to reason, we may tide over the storm, though, upon my honour, I was sore afraid this morning."

"Elizabeth has her father's blood in her veins," observed the earl, bitterly. "I had it in my mind to fling down an open defiance to her."

"Let us thank Heaven that a more prudent course had ultimate sway with you, my lord," replied Varney. "But tell me, are your fortunes altered for the worse, my lord, by this episode?"

"They are not," answered Leicester, frankly. "The queen has been more gracious than ever. She deems herself in fault. Her evident impression is that Amy is not answerable for her words and actions. If the marriage can be concealed, I do not know to what giddy height I may climb."

"It shall—it must be hidden!" cried Varney, eagerly; but he stopped abruptly, seeing that his heat had led him somewhat too far.

"I do not know what the future may bring forth, Varney," said the earl, reflectively. "The countess should listen to reason. At present I must avert disgrace and exposure. The poor girl does not know how to act. She needs guidance. I will see her."

"If you would leave the matter to me, my lord—"

"No. It is cowardly to keep away from her. I must see her," interrupted the earl. "She will listen to me where she would scout you. I mean no offence, Varney, but I am to blame in this matter, I am indeed, and were not the consequences of a discovery of the tacit deception—to use no harsher term—which I have practised on the queen likely to be so serious, I would avow everything, openly, at once."

"With your pardon, my lord," said Varney, "it is too late for that. If you had adopted that course six months ago all would have been well, but you have gone too far now."

"Perhaps so. I cannot tell. My favour is high with Elizabeth at present, higher than it ever was before, higher than I ever hoped it would be."

"Then keep it so. When the tide is taken at the flood it will lead on to fortune. Go, my lord, and reason with the countess, induce her for a time and for your sake to recognise my name; let her be conveyed hence, and I will answer for the rest."

"I will do so, Varney," answered the Earl of Leicester. "The countess is under the control of Lord Hunsdon, is she not?"

"As I am informed, my lord. But—"

"What would you say?" asked the earl, fixing an eager gaze upon him.

"There is danger, my lord, in any meeting between the countess and yourself. Permit me to go. I —"

"No. I say no. If any one can reason with her in her hot, distempered state, it is I," replied Leicester, quickly. "Do not attempt to dictate to me in this matter, Varney. I value your advice highly in most cases; at present forbear, lest you anger me."

Varney bit his lips and held his peace.

"I think there is a secret passage to the tower in which the countess lies. Attend me at night, and contrive to let her ladyship know that I shall wait upon her. You will have admission, and a word from you will do it."

"It shall be done, my lord," replied Varney, who withdrew.

"Ah, me!" sighed Leicester, when alone. "I am like a man in a rudderless boat, carried along on the breast of the torrent. There is a strange roaring in my ears. Methinks the rapids are near. Well, well, we are all in the hands of fate. I will do my best. The stars promised me success. Alcazar said so."

He approached the window and looked out upon the spacious vault of Heaven; but the night was dark, and not a star was to be seen.

"Darkness!" he muttered. "An evil omen. May it be averted."

(To be continued.)

A NOTICE has been issued by the Admiralty, stating that discharged seamen under 55 years of age at present in receipt of a pension, and all petty officers

and seamen under 45 years of age who may be pensioned after the 1st of April, 1871, will, if found fit, be admitted into the new Seamen Pensioners' Reserve.

THE PEARLS OF ERIN;

OR, THE HALF SISTERS.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE amazement of Michael Kildare, on finding himself confronted at the door of Yew Cottage by the young Lord O'Neil, whom he had believed to be in Antrim, became absolutely overpowering.

"Ah, this is an unexpected pleasure, my lord," said he, at length, forcing a sickly smile. "Are you out, like myself, on an errand of charity, or have you an old acquaintance with this good woman, the indigent sister, by the way, of my faithful housekeeper?"

"I am here on no errand of charity to a 'poor woman,' Mr. Kildare," said Lord O'Neil. "I came here to rescue Lady Nora Kildare from a loathsome and terrible imprisonment—"

The lawyer's face became livid. He turned a startled, terrified glance at Mrs. Fogarty, fancying that all his plans had miscarried, and that Lady Nora had been rescued from his snares by her lover.

"Her ladyship has been rescued!" cried Mrs. Fogarty, in tears and trembling. "Oh, Mr. Kildare, I was not to blame! My son Tim stole the key of Lady Nora's room and carried her off, and, by this and by that, I know that they have fled to England!"

Despite the revelation of his cruelty to his ward contained in this wild plaint the lawyer experienced a keen sense of relief in the certainty that Tim Fogarty and Lady Nora had gone away together. By this time, he thought, the young girl must be dead and buried beneath the channel waves. Nothing more was to be dreaded from her. His relief found expression in his countenance.

"This is the way in which you serve me, Mrs. Fogarty?" said he with apparent indignation. "This is your boasted faithfulness to me and mine!"

Then turning abruptly to Lord O'Neil, the lawyer, with less apparent excitement, said:

"My lord, no doubt all this surprises you. I do not know in what way you learned that my ward was at this house, but I shall not deny the fact that she has been here. I think I can justify my course towards her in any court of law. I am a bachelor, with little experience of women. Nora is proud, defiant, headstrong. She forgets that she is no longer Lady of Kildare, and defies my authority, declines my advice, and threatens to leave my house, alone and penniless, to make her own way in the world. To all my pleadings she turned a deaf ear, and at last, in pity to her, and to save her future suffering, I brought her to Yew Cottage, intending to keep her here until she should have grown submissive. Heaven knows it has cost me anguish enough to seem stern to poor Nora."

He looked up at Lord O'Neil with an expression of anguish on his smooth and gentle face. He seemed so honest, so grief-stricken, that the young lord must inevitably have believed in him, had she of whom the lawyer complained been other than Lady Nora.

But knowing Nora so well, Lord O'Neil was constrained to believe this gentle, soft-voiced little man was a hypocrite.

"I am glad she has gone to Sir Russel," pursued Michael Kildare, wiping his damp brow. "I am glad of it. It relieves me of a fearful responsibility. I shall write to Sir Russel by the earliest post."

"Nora has not gone to him," said Lord O'Neil, abruptly. "I came here last night, soon after Nora's flight. I went afterwards to Black Rock and to Kingstown in search of her. She did not go to-day by the packet-boat, but I have discovered, to my satisfaction, that she left Black Rock last night in a sloop with Fogarty. She should have arrived at Liverpool, with this wind, at noon to-day. But, on telegraphing to Sir Russel Ryan, I learned this evening that she had not yet been heard from. She would have telegraphed on landing, to her chief guardian. The inference is, she has not landed in England."

As he made this announcement, Lord O'Neil watched Kildare closely. There was guilt expressed in the lawyer's sudden start, in the quick change of colour, in the sudden quiver of his lips.

"You have allowed but a short time for the voyage, my lord," he faltered.

"You think so? Why should I allow more, when I believe she is not on her way to England at all? I know you, Michael Kildare—hypocrite and false-doer! I believe you capable of anything except murder. I have a clue to Nora's present hiding-place, and I am going to find her!"

Without another word, he swept out upon the lawn, found his horse under the yews, mounted and hurried into the road.

While Kildare was eagerly questioning Mrs. Fogarty concerning the alleged "clue," Lord O'Neill took the road leading to the Grand Canal, and was presently riding swiftly along the tow-path, his nearest course to Dublin.

His mind was quite decided to follow up the hint Mrs. Fogarty had dropped concerning the existence of her late husband's relatives on the coast of County Down.

"Kildare would send her to some humble, poverty-stricken place, to compel her to yield the sooner," he thought. "He began by putting her into a dungeon, and he will do no better by her now. As he has this Fogarty in his interests, he would naturally allow Fogarty to choose Nora's place of imprisonment. And as she is taken away in a sloop, they would naturally think of a hiding-place on the coast. Yes, I am convinced I shall find Nora on the coast of County Down, in the hands of these Fogartys. I will lose no time in putting the question to the test."

On arriving at Dublin he rode to an hotel, stabled his horse, and took a room for the few hours remaining of the night. He was to be called in time for the first north-bound train.

He snatched a little sleep, being wearied with his hard rides, his anxieties, and his previous night's sleeplessness, but he was awake and astir at daylight.

He wrote a note to Aileen Mahon, at Black Rock, enjoining her to return to her father at Point Kildare as soon as possible. Enclosing a bank-note in this letter, he went out to post it, and on his return made arrangements to have the horse he had ridden returned to its owner at Kingstown. He then ate his breakfast in haste, and half an hour later was seated alone in a first-class compartment of a railway carriage, on his way to Dundalk, *vid Drogheda*.

On his arrival at Dundalk the question arose as to how he should next proceed. There were plenty of sails in the bay, and a steamer or two; but it was Lord O'Neill's instinct to move quietly. He decided to continue his search on horseback.

Obtaining in the town a fine, powerful animal of mixed breed, he mounted and set out on his journey. He proceeded directly to Jonesborough on the line of the railway, and from that point struck out for the east, crossing the Newry river and canal at Warrenspoint on Lough Carlingford, and going to Rosstrevor, a pleasant little watering-place. From this point he followed the high road to Kilkeel.

From the little town of Kilkeel the road followed the line of the coast as far as Newcastle, and it was between these two points that Lord O'Neill expected to find the coast-side cabin of the Fogartys.

At Kilkeel he stopped an hour to feed and rest his horse, and to make inquiries concerning the Fogartys, but he gained no information, and he resumed his journey with renewed energies and desperate resolves, but with sinking hopes.

The idea now occurred to him, for the first time since leaving Dublin, that he might have been imposed upon by Mrs. Fogarty, whose son might have taken Lady Nora to the south of Ireland, to Scotland, or to some lonely island off the coast, where help could never come to her.

The thought was like a knife thrust. He spurred on his horse, trying to forget his now and terrible fears in the swiftness of his progress.

Dunmore Head was passed, and then commenced an inquiry at every wayside cabin and lonely house the young lord encountered. It was dreary and fatiguing work, seeming all the more trying because it was so barren of result.

Just as the night was falling Lord O'Neill rode up to an humble wooden cabin and made his inquiries in a dispirited voice; but here, for the first time, encouragement came to him.

"Is it the Fogartys ye're wanting?" an old woman, in a huge frilled cap and a short gown, asked him, coming forward from her spinning-wheel. "Sure ye're on the right track, your honour. The Fogartys live a mile beyond, on Stony Point, but it's not a nice place for your honour to be going to after dark. Them Fogartys have a bad name, and though the young ones are out in their smack, old Rough is a dozen to the fore!"

The young lord laughed, in his relief and joy, and tossed back the tawny hair from his fair brow as he answered, with a glance down at his simple garments:

"I am not afraid, mother, though thank you all the same for your friendly warning. There's a trifle to fill your pipe," he added, tossing her a half-crown. The old woman muttered a benediction on him as he rode swiftly away.

The remaining mile was quickly traversed. A light was gleaming from the small window of the long stone cabin of the Fogartys as the traveller drew near. There was no person on the rocky point and no sail could be seen outside. But for the light, the premises would have seemed deserted.

At a little distance—about a quarter of a mile—from the cabin was a thick growth of stunted trees, a mere patch by the roadside; here Lord O'Neill dismounted, and secured his horse among the thick shadows. Here also he took occasion to examine the pistol with which he had provided himself in Dublin.

He then went forward hastily on foot, and approached the cabin. Here, moving cautiously and almost silently, he circled the cabin several times, keeping both sight and hearing on the alert.

The lonely and isolated position of the dwelling confirmed his convictions that Lady Nora had been brought to this spot, and was now detained here a prisoner. Some instinct assured him that she was near him, and his eyes glowed and his cheeks burned with the longing to free her and clasp her in his arms.

"She is here! she is here!" he said to himself. "I know that she is here! But which is her window? In what room is she imprisoned?"

Again and again he looked at the tiny square aperture in the wall, which served as window to the room in which Lady Nora was actually confined, but he had no idea that this belonged to her room, and he dared not make closer investigations, for fear of alarming the household.

"There are but two in the family," he thought, "the sons being away. Surely I can deal with the old couple. But how?"

He looked keenly around him. The night was dark, thick shadows falling heavily upon land and sea. The waves beat with ceaseless swell on the rocks of the point, their mournful roar pulsing heavily on the air.

An idea came to the young lord suddenly. If the sons were away on a fishing excursion, might they not be expected home at any moment? The thought was suggestive of a plan of action.

He crept out on the rough and jagged point, over drifts of slippery seaweeds and coarse-meshed nets spread out to dry, falling against a row-boat turned bottom up, and finally gained a spot on the extreme end of the reef of rocks, where the furious swell threatened to carry him off his feet with its swift lunges.

Then again he turned his eyes seaward. All was gloom and intense darkness under the heavy clouds veiling the sky. Not a star was visible. The eye could trace the white caps of the waves and catch the phosphorescent gleams of light on the waters for a little distance, but beyond that all was shadow.

Raising his voice, Lord O'Neill shouted in husky tones:

"Ahoy, there! Cabin, ahoy!"

Then, as quick as the words were uttered, he crept back over the rocks of the point, crossed the nets, and crouched near the cabin, behind a pile of seaweed.

As he had calculated, his hoarse challenge had been heard by the inmates of the cabin, and been mistaken for the call of the fisher sons on their return from their cruise.

Lord O'Neill had scarcely enconced himself behind the seaweed, when the cabin door flew open and old Rough Fogarty came rushing out upon the rocks, hatless and barefooted, and all excitement.

The cabin door was left open behind him, and the young lord could see the old woman sitting in the glow of the seaweed fire.

"Ahoy, there!" shouted old Rough, running out to the end of the point, and straining his eyes through the dense gloom. "Ahoy, it is! Is it there ye are, Mike and Tom?"

He waited a moment, but of course no answer came.

"Sure ye'll go on the rocks, if this is the way ye keep on!" cried old Rough, fairly dancing on the slippery rocks, in his anxiety and excitement. "Old woman, bring out the lantern. The smack is going to pieces, don't ye hear her? Oh, the spalpeens! Mike and Tom, spake, will ye? Av ye die I don't care, av this is the way ye act, ye murtherin' cratures! Oh, bad luck! The lantern, Ann! The lantern!"

The old woman sprang up and lighted a great horn lantern, with which she ran out to the assistance of her husband.

"Bad luck the day!" cried old Rough, seizing the lantern rudely and waving it above his head. "The smack is going down! Don't ye hear her grating on the rocks? It's enough to make a man curse his grandmother; oh, bad luck to it! Mike! Tom! Av ye don't answer ye'll be sorry the day! Av ye're dying say so! Av ye're drowned say so! Do ye hear, Mike and Tom?"

While he and the old woman were waiting for some response to this adjuration, Lord O'Neill quietly rose up from his concealment, glided to the cabin, entered it, and closed the door.

Then he looked around him, in the light of the seaweed fire, and called softly:

"Nora! Nora!"

CHAPTER XXX.

THERE came no answer to Lord O'Neill's low cry—no answer, although he called on Nora's name yet more loudly.

"Not here!" he whispered to himself, his bronzed face paling. "Not here! Is all lost after all? My poor Nora!"

He glanced around the room swiftly and keenly. Then his eyes fell upon the wooden bar of the inner door—the door of the young Lady Nora's prison, into which she had been thrust on the preceding day.

With one wild bound he gained the barred door, and beat upon it with his hands. Then he cried out in a passionate voice, clear as a bugle-call, and rich and deep:

"Nora, Nora, darling? Are you here?"

There was a moment of breathless suspense, then a swift rush was heard within the little room, a low, passionate, eager cry sounded on the other side of the door, and Nora answered, in her high, sweet voice, broken now and panting:

"Larry! It's not Larry?"

In the wild joy and excitement of that moment the young Lord O'Neill forgot his prudence and the proximity of the young girl's enemies.

With a joyful exclamation he wrenched the wooden bar that guarded the door from its sockets, and pulled the door open.

Then a slight, girlish figure came fluttering out into the fire-lit room—a figure with floating dusky hair, and a white, eager face lit up by a pair of dusky, passionate eyes. This figure flew to his arms as to a rightful home.

"Nora! Nora!" cried O'Neill, his soul in his voice.

The girl answered with hysterical laughter and tears.

"Oh, Larry, I've been longing for you to come to me," she said, her voice quivering. "You don't know what I've suffered since I left Point Kildare! Take me away, please. Where are the Fogartys?"

His lordship started as they were recalled to his mind.

"They are out on the rocks, looking for the wreck of their smack," he said, smiling. "But how pale and thin you are, Nora, my dear! You have been starved and ill-treated, it's easy to see; but that's all over. We'll be going now!"

He put his arm around her slender waist, and drew her towards the door.

"One moment," said Nora. "Wait one moment, Larry."

She broke from his clasp and ran into the inner room, returning immediately with her hat and cloak on. Then she put her arm in his, signifying her readiness for departure.

Too late! They had not taken a step towards the threshold when the door was burst open, and Fogarty and his wife, bringing with them the wreck of the broken lantern, which had fallen on the rocks, rushed into the room.

"The other lantern!" cried old Rough. "Av the halloo was genuine, we must look for the b'yes. Av it were the cry of some murtherin' ghost, we ought to know it. Oh, begorra! what's this?"

His glances had rested upon the young pair. In his terror and astonishment he leaped back several paces, uttering a shrill yell. 'This yell was echoed by Mrs. Fogarty, who followed her retreating spouse with such impetus as to knock the remnant of the lantern from his hand.

"A—a ghost!" ejaculated old Rough.

"A spalpeen of a man who wants to rob us of our five pounds a week," cried Mrs. Fogarty, more sensible than her husband. "Bate him off, Rough! 'Way with ye, ye miserable thafo!"

"You are not very choice in your terms of address, madam," observed Lord O'Neill, coolly. "But I am willing to overlook your discourtesy in consideration of your excitement."

"Anan!" exclaimed the utterly bewildered Mrs. Fogarty. "Spake English, will ye, ye blackguard?"

"Certainly I will!" declared his lordship, with a comical smile. "I am here to take away this lady, and I'll give you just one minute to get away from that door, so that we can pass out. D'ye mind that, now?" he added, with an assumed brogue, that would have done credit to a native of Kerry.

Mrs. Fogarty understood now, but by the sullen, angry look on her face one might judge she was no better pleased than before.

Old Rough had by this time recovered from his temporary paralysis, and was now himself again.

He closed the door, bracing his broad back against it, demanding, surlily:

"Who are ye now? And what are ye wantin'?"

"I have no objections to telling you who I am," returned the intruder, his bold blue eyes looking from one to the other of the grotesque couple. "I am Lord O'Neill of County Antrim!"

"Wild Larry of the Glen?" asked Fogarty.

"The same. What I'm wanting is this young lady, Lady Nora Kildare, my promised wife. I've traced her here, and I shall take her hence with me."

"Not while I am to the fore," said old Fogarty, grimly. "Whether you're some mudlarkin' blackguard from Dublin or baysant I don't know. What I do know is that while the young lady stays here for country board I'm her natural protector. I'm paid five pound a week for keeping her, and keep her I will!"

"We'll see about that," said Wild Larry, his blue eyes flashing. "You can let Lady Nora go peaceably, or you can let her go after you have your head broken. Take your choice."

"I'll have a fight for her, any how!" said old Fogarty, resolutely. "Ann, quit your snivelling and fetch me my shillelah; the one I had over to Killeel, mind."

Mrs. Fogarty ran to bring the desired weapon, a great, knotted blackthorn stick, from the shelf over the fire, and handed it to her husband.

He flourished it over his head, cutting the air with it sharply.

"I'm spilling for a fight," he observed, with increasing grimness. "You won't make two bites for me, Wild Larry. Maybe ye ain't heard why they call me Rough. It's the fighting blood in me. It's from Limerick I came in the old times, and down in Limerick they whisk a man over for looking at ye. Now I give you a chance. Walk out o' that door alone, and ye may go."

"I'll go when I get ready, and not alone," remarked Lord O'Neill, quietly. "I generally do as I please, Mister Fogarty. Maybe ye ain't heard why they call me 'Wild Larry.' Well, I'll show you."

He turned to the young girl clinging to his arm, and put her from him gently and tenderly, smiling into her anxious eyes.

"Sit down a minute, darling," he said, in a low voice. "I must just give this old fellow a lesson. Have no fears."

His confident smile reassured Lady Nora. She sat down on a bench near the slow-burning fire.

"Come on!" cried Fogarty, waving his big shillelah, and uttering a cry that would have done credit to the "Bull of Bashan." "Come on, will ye? I want to give ye the taste of Limerick timber. Come on!"

"I'm coming!" said Wild Larry, smiling. And he went! One swift bound brought him to old Rough's side. Fogarty raised his club to crush or fell the audacious young fellow, but, with a movement as agile as that of a panther, his lordship snatched the weapon out of the old man's hand to the door.

And before Fogarty could stoop to pick it up, the young lord had caught it up.

"I've come, you see!" he said, still smiling. "Do you want to feel my presence also?"

As he spoke he gave the old man a kind of playful tapping on either side of the head with the shillelah.

Fogarty's rage at this point was fearful to witness. He had long been the bully of the coast, and was noted as a brawler and fighter. To have his laurels torn from him by "a young aristocrat," to be disgraced in the eyes of his own wife, who had the family veneration for muscle and contempt for physical weakness, was not to be borne.

With a yell and a roar, he hurled himself against the young lord.

"Let 'em fight fair!" muttered the old woman, seating herself on a bench and rocking her body to and fro. "Let 'em fight fair. But Rough will beat. He always does."

Lady Nora could scarcely keep back the cry of fear that trembled on her lips. Yet even in that moment she could not resist a thrill of admiration as her lover's bright and dauntless face and lithe, active figure flashed again and again before her vision. He did not look like one to be easily beaten. He looked rather, in his bold, spirited attitudes, like one born to be a conqueror in everything he undertook—like one who knows no such word as "fail."

Presently his lordship flung away the shillelah, and a vigorous hand-to-hand conflict succeeded. The white, firm hands of Wild Larry pumelled his adversary with crushing force, now parrying a blow, now striking one home in the burly breast or in the red and puffy face of the old smuggler.

"All that's gone has been play!" said Lord O'Neill, when old Fogarty began to pant for breath. "This is earnest!"

He accompanied the words with a blow so unexpected and so stunning, delivered full upon the fisher's thick skull, that the old man reeled and stumbled to the floor, where he lay for a moment half stupefied.

"It was a fair fight—a fair fight!" muttered old Mrs. Fogarty, rocking herself with greater vehemence. "Old Rough has met his match at last—and

—and," she added, under her breath, "I'm glad of it!"

The fallen man glared up at his conqueror.

The latter looked down upon him unruffled, unperturbed, and smiling calmly.

"Now you know why they call me Wild Larry," said the young lord, quietly.

"Ay, I know!" grunted old Fogarty. "I know to my cost. Why didn't they call ye the evil one, while they were naming ye?"

"Hearing you praise your Limerick blood," remarked Lord O'Neill, "I thought I'd let you know the quality of Antrim blood! You see, my good man, that Antrim ain't far behind Limerick! Perhaps now," he added, as the burly Fogarty struggled to his feet, "you might like a look at this?"

He drew out his pistol, the one he had purchased in Dublin, and turned it over carelessly in his hands.

Old Rough and his wife uttered exclamations of terror. Like many who pride themselves on physical prowess, they had an exaggerated horror of firearms.

Old Fogarty, blinded and dizzy, staggered to a seat.

"Put up your fowling-piece, my lord," he said, humbly enough. "For the first time in my life I've found my better. Av ye lived in County Down, I'd move out of it. I have nothing more to say!"

"I presume not," observed the young lord, smiling coolly. "And now we will leave you to search for Mike and Tom, whom you seem to have temporarily forgotten."

Wild Larry took up the small parcel of Lady Nora's effects, gave the young girl his arm, and led her to the door. He opened it, and they passed out together into the lonely, dreary night, with its dun, heavy shadows, its chill autumn wind, and the roaring murmur of the sad sea waves.

But to young Lady Nora the night was gloriously beautiful. Had she not been saved from a fearful bondage by the one she loved best on earth, and was not Larry with her now?

The lovers did not speak until they had crossed the garden path and gained the high road beyond.

Then Lord O'Neill gathered the young girl to his heart, and she whispered softly, as his kisses fell upon her perfumed hair:

"This moment pays me for all. The future looks dark to me, Larry, but this moment has brightness enough to gild all its gloom!"

"There'll be no more trouble for you, darling!" cried the young lord, in his passionate joy. "No one shall ever again dare to harm you. As old Fogarty says, 'I'm to the fore!' I shall never lose sight of you again!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

LORD O'NEIL conducted the young Lady Nora along the road to the patch of shrubbery in the shelter of which his horse was waiting. The lovers walked leisurely, having no fears that old Rough Fogarty would again attack them, or willingly encounter the risk of another pummelling from the hands of the young nobleman.

They were right. The old ex-smuggler was too thoroughly humiliated and "demoralised" to entertain a thought of attempting to recover his late captive. Besides, he was still stunned and bewildered, his head was dizzy, and half of his ordinary strength had deserted him. In short, he was in no condition to go to war with his present conqueror.

On arriving at the spot where his horse was secured a new difficulty presented itself. How was Lady Nora to ride without a lady's saddle? The young girl solved the question for herself.

"I can easily manage," she said, cheerfully, seeing her lover's look of dismay. "The horse is strong enough, and can easily carry two. I will ride behind you, Larry, and cling to you, so that to fall off would be impossible! Let us try it."

They did try it, and the young lord thought the arrangement admirable when he felt the slender, clinging arm around his waist. He decided in his own mind that he could not have improved upon this plan if he had tried.

Giving rein to his horse, they rode out upon the highway, pursuing the road to Killeel. As they rode slowly along they talked in lovers' fashion.

Presently, when his first transports at their reunion and at Nora's safety began to be succeeded by a calm reflectiveness, his lordship said:

"Ah, Nora, I never knew how I loved you till these perils overtook you! I shall never dare to let you go from me again. Michael Kildare has proved himself an unworthy guardian, and he must never assume authority over you again. When I went to Dublin, in obedience to Aileen Mahon's summons, and went with her to Yew Cottage, and made my way to your little dark prison cell, I vowed within myself that this false kinsman of yours should never

have you in his charge again. I can hardly believe that that little, soft-voiced, mild-eyed, deprecating man is the villain at heart he has proved himself. I can hardly credit the fact that he shut you up to compel you to marry the new earl!"

"He did worse than that, Larry!"

"Worse, Nora?"

"Yes. He hired Mrs. Fogarty's son to kill me."

Lord O'Neill uttered an exclamation of horror.

"It is true, Larry," affirmed Lady Nora, sorrowfully and gravely. "He hired Tim Fogarty to convey me to sea, and push me overboard or throw me over when I should fall asleep. Fogarty would have obeyed him to the letter, but that he fancied it would be a better speculation to keep me alive. Oh, Larry, you will hardly believe the baseness and treachery of Michael! I loved him so, too, Larry, and I trusted him so!"

"But there must be some hideous, frightful mistake in all this!" cried Lord O'Neill, with a shudder. "My darling, the plan you attribute to your kinsman is one of a foul and awful murder! That little, soft, smiling, dapper man—he who has always seemed to love you so—could he deliberately plan to destroy your young life?—to kill you because you refused to marry the man he desired? It is incredible. Nora, Nora, darling, you have been deceived. It is impossible!"

"Ah, no, Larry. I would give much to know it impossible. But it is true, as you will acknowledge when you hear my story. Listen, Larry!"

With flashing eyes, cheeks flushing redly in her just indignation and her horror, and a voice impetuous and passionate with her terrible grief, the young Lady Nora told her story. She began her recital by telling how she had returned to her guardian's house from a walk at nightfall, and had gone into the library and the alcove adjoining; how the lawyer and the new earl had come in and talked together privately; how she had openly avowed her presence; how they were rendered thereby desperate and frightened; and she detailed the stirring interview that had followed, and which had ended in her transportation to Yew Cottage, and her imprisonment there in a dark cell. Then she related the circumstances attending Michael Kildare's visit to her, and how, in her hot indignation, she had declared to him all her knowledge of his baseness and hypocrisy. She concluded by narrating the incidents, fresh in the memory of the reader, of Tim Fogarty's night visit to her room, his pretended rescue of her, his flight with her to Black Rock, and from that point out upon the Channel; detailing also his revelations to her of his employer's baseness, and all that had followed up to the moment of her lover's opportune appearance at Rough Fogarty's cabin.

Lord O'Neill listened to this narrative breathlessly. As the clear utterances fell on his hearing, his doubts of Michael Kildare's intended blood-guiltiness gave place to a conviction of his utter baseness and wickedness.

"My poor Nora!" he said, tenderly and compassionately. "This has been a fearful experience for you, whose life till this new Earl of Kildare came was bright and joyous! You met all these perils alone! That was hardest of all."

"I did not meet them alone, Larry," replied the girl, in a low, reverent voice. "I never felt alone when I was out with my enemy on the waters! He who guards the helpless and the innocent was with me, and I was not afraid!"

The young lord took one of the little hands from its close clasp on his coat and raised it gently and reverently to his lips.

"The conversation you overheard in the lawyer's library must have been of great importance," said The O'Neill, after a brief silence, "since it could drive Michael Kildare to plans of murder."

"It was of gravest importance. He told the new earl that he, Redmond Kildare, was earl only by Michael's sufferance. He told him that there was a flaw in his claims, which, if it were known, would cast him back into his former obscurity, and give back to me my old wealth and honours."

Lord O'Neill started.

"Can this be possible?" he asked.

"It is. Redmond Kildare has, in truth, no legal claim to Point Kildare, nor to the family titles."

"Then why does Michael support his claims?"

"Perhaps because he is paid for it. Perhaps for some deeper reason. There is some mystery in Michael's conduct which I cannot fathom. All I know is that he has risked everything on the chances of Redmond's success, and that he would sacrifice me, because he fears I may make trouble for his favourite."

"Then Redmond is not really the earl?"

"No, he is not!" the girl answered, gravely.

"And you are lawfully the heiress of Kildare, Nora?" questioned the young lord.

"Yes, Larry."

"Since this is the case," said Lord O'Neill, "and

these two men have banded together against you, and Michael Kildare has tried to destroy your life, you are not safe, Nora. Even in the care of Sir Russel Ryan you would not be safe. These two Kildares are dangerous enemies, and the sturdy old Sir Russel will not be able to defend you from them. He will have no conception of their baseness, their williness, their intrigues. He is an intimate friend of Michael Kildare, who is his lawyer in Ireland, and one word from Michael will outweigh a hundred from you. My darling, you are in a position of the utmost peril."

"I know it," said Lady Nora, quietly.
"Then what is to be done?" asked the young lord, turning in his saddle so as to partially face her. "You are still a minor, and as such you are subject to your guardians. One of these is villainous and seeks your life. The other is the confiding friend of the first, and would believe nothing against him. Nora, never in your life did you need a friend and protector as you need one now. Let me take you over to the Scottish shore, where we can be married by good old Mr. Cowan. Once my wife, Michael Kildare's authority over you will cease. Once my wife, Nora mavourneon, you will be safe. I will watch over you day and night. I will defend you with my life. Say Yes, Nora—say Yes."

He looked at her with eager, passionate eyes, his noble face all aglow. It was hard for Nora to refuse a pleading like this, but all her instincts revolted against a stolen marriage.

"No, Larry," she answered, smiling sorrowfully. "It cannot be. When I marry you I must not do so clandestinely. I shall be married in my own chapel at Point Kildare, by my own dear old chaplain, and with my household and tenantry around me."

"But, Nora, when can this be? Your guardians will take you away—to Dublin—to England! We shall be separated—perhaps for ever! But if you were to marry me, we would go to Glen O'Neil and defy your enemies—"

"The place for the Lady of Kildare is at Kildare!" exclaimed the girl, impetuously. "I thought out my course while I was shut up in old Rough's cabin. I am going now, first of all, to Point Kildare. The new earl, or pretended earl, is still in Dublin—"

"But his mother is at the castle!"

"True, but I do not fear her. I am going home, and shall resume possession of my rights. I shall telegraph to Sir Russel and to Kathleen to come to me. I will stand a siege at Kildare Castle before I will retire from it and give place to the new claimant. If he wants Kildare now, he must win it through a recourse to the law!"

Lord O'Neil looked admiringly into the spirited young face. How brave the girl was!

"Perhaps you are right, Nora," he said. "We will carry your plan into effect. We will summon to us Sir Russel Ryan and Lady Kathleen. Lord Tresham is at Glen O'Neil, gloomy, dispirited, despairing. He shall come to Point Kildare as assistant guard. The new earl shall not be permitted to again set foot in the castle until the law confirms his claims!"

"Which it will no doubt do!" declared Lady Nora. "Sir Russel and Mr. Wedburn could not perceive this hidden flaw in Redmond Kildare's claims, and the revelation of what I overheard in Michael Kildare's library will go for nothing in a court of law. My only hope is that these conspirators may in some way betray themselves. At any rate," she added, setting her scarlet lips together resolutely, "Redmond Kildare will find a sudden obstacle in his path. He must fight his way!"

The lovers discussed Nora's plan at full length, deciding upon carrying it into effect.

They rode on slowly through the night and the darkness. It was nearly midnight when they arrived at Kilkeel, which was already wrapped in silence and gloom. They rode slowly through the little town, taking the road to Rostrevor.

After leaving Kilkeel, fearing that their mode of travelling was fatiguing to Lady Nora, the young lord dismounted, seated his charge in his saddle, and then walked at her side with his hand upon the bridle of her horse.

It was thus they continued their journey, the girl's splendid face drooping towards the noble, glowing one uplifted to her, and her shy, sweet voice responding now and then to his passionate utterances.

The eight miles to Rostrevor were completed by two o'clock of the chilly October morning, even at the rate of progress the young couple made. Lady Nora was averse to going to an hotel at that hour, and after some deliberation the wanderers decided to go on to Jonesborough, from which place they proceeded to Dundalk.

They arrived at the seaport town after daybreak, tired and worn. Lord O'Neil conducted Nora to the railway station, and then returned his horse to his owner. He presently came back to his betrothed

with the announcement that a little eating-house in the neighbourhood was open and that he had ordered a breakfast to be made ready at once.

The young couple proceeded to the eating-house, a neat, small place, where they were attended by a brisk waiter in a long white apron, and where was served to them a hot breakfast of chops and tea and toast, the best that the house afforded at that hour.

Breakfast over, the lovers returned to the station, and, leaving Lady Nora in a waiting-room, Lord O'Neil telegraphed to Sir Russel Ryan that he had found the Lady of Kildare, and that she was now on her way to Kildare Castle. He begged Sir Russel to come to his ward at once.

This message despatched, The O'Neil sent one to Lady Kathleen Bassantyne at Ballyconnor, via Wicklow, requesting her to come to Lady Nora at Kildare immediately.

His lordship then returned to his charge, detailing what he had done.

"Did you telegraph to Lord Tresham?" asked Nora. "No, it would have done no good. I received Alleen's message by the merest chance, but such a thing might not occur again for years. Glen O'Neil is beyond the reach of telegraphic messages. It would take a message a day or two to find Castle Ruin. But I have some expectation of meeting Lord Tresham at the Dunloy station. He has a habit of riding over there almost daily."

After an hour or more of waiting, the lovers proceeded on their journey to Dunloy, by way of Belfast, going by the mail train.

They had a first-class compartment of the railway carriage to themselves, and the time passed swiftly. They were astonished at last when the guard opened the door, announcing their arrival at Dunloy.

On alighting at the station the first person the young couple encountered was Lord Tresham.

He was looking stern, silent, and gloomy. He had aged greatly during the past few weeks. His restless, haggard eyes, however, brightened as their gaze rested upon the new arrivals, and he hurried towards Nora and Lord O'Neil with outstretched hands.

"Thank Heaven, Larry!" he ejaculated. "You have found Lady Nora! I have been a prey to the wildest fears concerning her. Alleen Mahon arrived last night and was met at the station by her father, who took her on to Point Kildare. She told me a frightful story—"

"Which is all true, Tresham!" interposed Lord O'Neil. "We are now on our way to Kildare. Come with us."

Lord Tresham assented, and Lord O'Neil hastened to procure a carriage, in which the three proceeded towards Point Kildare.

Lady Nora's story was told to Lord Tresham, who proved himself the most sympathetic of friends and listeners. He cordially approved of Nora's resolution to take possession of Kildare Castle and hold it until compelled to relinquish it.

"I have sent for Kathleen to come to me," said Nora. "I shall need her, and no doubt she will gladly leave her husband for a few weeks, or even longer!"

"He will not come here with her?" asked Tresham, growing pale.

"I think not. He is a strange, moody man, and shrinks from other people. He may refuse to allow Kathleen to come, but she will not heed his commands. Poor Kathleen! Tied to a man she loathes, what a sad destiny is hers!"

Lord Tresham averted his head, making no reply. The journey to Point Kildare was performed in good time, and the party arrived at Kildare Cut-off just as the first glow of the sunset began to glorify the sky.

The carriage rolled over the drawbridge and came to a halt as old Dennis, the bridge-keeper, came hobbling out of his gate-house to meet it, according to his ancient custom.

Lady Nora put out her bright, piquant face from the carriage window.

"Dennis!" she called, softly.

The haggard old man rushed towards her with a cry of joy.

"My lady! my lady!" he ejaculated. "It is my lady!"

"Yes, it is I, Dennis," said the girl, extending her little hand through the carriage window. "I am come home, good Dennis!"

The bridge-keeper caught her hand in his, kissing it with a wild fervor. These simple retainers of the Lady of Kildare had an ardent love and admiration for their lovely little lady, and more than one of them would have laid down his life to benefit her.

Old Dennis was almost wild with excitement. "Thank Heaven this day!" he cried. "Our lady will have her rights again. The new earl is a villain, as I said he was! My lady," he added, pausing abruptly, in a gathering terror, "it is not to marry the earl you've come?"

"No, no, Dennis. Is the earl here?"

"He's in Dublin, my lady, but is expected back with Mr. Michael Kildare."

"And the new countess, Dennis?"

"She is at the castle, had luck to her. There's not a soul on the island but hates her. She is gone out riding now with two attendants, and is over somewhere on the mainland. She's the old scratch and all, my lady, and it's we that think she ain't got all the craziness out of her yet."

"She's on the mainland?" inquired Lady Nora, quickly. "Ah! And Mahon? Is he still on the island?"

"Yes, my lady; but the new earl has discharged him, and is going to bring a new steward and servants up from Dublin. And Mr. Michael's coming to teach the new steward his duties. And Mr. Mahon and the chaplain and the servants and I are all to leave to-morrow. And it's ejections they are going to serve on the tenants—"

"Not just yet!" cried Lady Nora, her sunny eyes flashing. "Lord Kildare must prove his rights in court. Until the judges award him Kildare he must not set foot on this soil! Nor must his mother. You hear, Dennis? We will stand a siege first, as my ancestors did in the old feudal times. Up with the drawbridge, Dennis. We have found a use for the stout old relic at last! Up with the drawbridge, and let no one land on the island!"

The old man's face kindled. He was all excitement and joy.

"Ay, ay, my lady!" he exclaimed. "The new countess can't cross to here! The Cut-off is awelled with the autumn rains, and the water is fairly a biling in it, so that there'll be no way to get over without they go round," he added, perpetrating a "bull" in his earnestness. "They'll have to land from the seaside, my lady, if they land at all!"

He hurried to call assistance and to draw up the ponderous old bridge.

When she had seen that foot performed Lady Nora gave the order that the carriage should proceed towards the castle.

Long before the new arrivals had threaded the tree-arched avenue and arrived at their destination, old Dennis and his assistant had done their best to spread over the island the glad news of Lady Nora's home-coming.

When the carriage drew up before the great doors of the castle Lady Nora was treated to an ovation that brought the tears to her eyes.

The chaplain, Mr. Mahon, many of the tenants, all the family servants, including Mrs. Kelly the housekeeper, Alleen Mahon, and old Shane, were there to receive her. The chapel bell rang out a merry peal, and the children of the servants and tenantry, lately released from their small school-house, made the air ring with their shouts.

It was a joyful hour for the late fugitive.

"I believe I have done well to act thus boldly," she said as she sprang lightly out on the steps and shook hands with her devoted friends. "If everything end triumphantly for my enemies, I shall feel I have done the best I could to keep that which is rightfully mine."

The ovation was in full progress when old Dennis's assistant came running towards the groups on the castle lawn and steps, crying out:

"The countess has come to the Cut-off, and she acted like a mad woman when she found the bridge up, and old Dennis refused to let her cross. She rode up and down, as if to swim across! At last, when she found my lady had come home and taken possession, she lifted up her fist and cursed a big curse. Then she rode off, saying she'd go to Dunloy and telegraph for her son. The two servants went with her."

"That is as well," said the young Lady of Kildare, her face bright as sunshine. "We'll take the sorrow when it comes. Now let us taste the joy. Throw the castle doors wide open, Mrs. Kelly. Come in, all of you, my friends!"

She swept up the steps, leaning on the arm of The O'Neil, with Lord Tresham following her.

(To be continued.)

GAS IN NEW YORK.—The streets of New York are lighted by 18,017 gas burners, owned by the different companies as follows:—Manhattan, 7084; New York, 3241; Harlem, 4000; Metropolitan, 3692. Each burner consumes 3ft. of gas per hour, and burns 3833 hours and twenty minutes per year. The price paid the companies is 53 dols. per annum for each lamp used in New York. The number of feet of gas burned per annum by the city in lighting the streets is 134,360,483; the cost of material is 441,416.50 dols.; the annual cost of gas is 954,001 dols. The Manhattan Company has two hundred miles of main pipe; the New York, one hundred; the Metropolitan, ninety-five; and the Harlem, ninety-eight.

THE LONDON READER AND LIFE AND FASHION.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

REDCLIFF (Bristol).—Try Dr. Halleur's rudimentary book on "Photography," which can be procured by order from any bookseller, price one shilling.

B. F. (Ikeston).—There does not appear to be a small cheap work on the subject. It is referred to at some length in all the cyclopedias and dictionaries of arts and manufactures.

A SUFFERER FROM DEAFNESS.—A drop or two of sheep's gall lodged in the ear at bed-time is likely to be serviceable in a case of deafness, provided the ear is syringed with warm soap and water on the next morning.

HARRY TREMAINE.—Anything you send will, subject to our fixed regulations, receive due attention, notwithstanding the unfavourable impression which your orthographical blunders have produced.

N. A.—1. Burns died in 1790 at the age of thirty-seven; Byron in 1824 in his thirty-sixth year. 2. A cable's length is 120 fathoms, or 720 feet. 3. A Turkish Cadi is the judge in civil affairs, having jurisdiction over some Turkish towns or villages.

G. Y.—A Rubefacient is any application that excites redness upon the skin; thus the ingredients in question are to be applied as a lotion to the parts suffering from pain, until redness of the skin is produced by the effects of the lotion.

AT HOLLOWAY.—The handwriting is good. Black hair and eyes are often a portion of the beauties found in handsome women. Seventeen is over young to marry; at that age a lassie may not and should not marry without the consent of her parents.

R. W.—1. Frequent washings with lukewarm water, and attention towards the improvement of the health generally. 2. Out-door exercise, early hours at both commencement and end of the day, regular meals, and abstinence from stimulants. 3. The handwriting is good.

ISOMORPHISM.—Many grammars assert that the "h" in "hospital" is silent, and that, therefore, the word requires an "a" before it and not "a." There exists, however, a contrary opinion. You could use the aspirate or not, and in each instance be supported by authority. You should, however, elect to adopt one method only.

AMELIA.—There was such a punishment in the early days of ancient Rome. It fell to the lot of a vestal virgin who had broken her vow. She was confined to a vault in which had been placed bread, water, milk, oil, a burning lamp, and a couch. Having been let down into this place, earth was cast upon her till the pit was filled up—she was thus buried alive.

L. M.—In our opinion the handwriting is not too bold. Well kept. To allow a gentleman, to whom you have not been introduced, to escort you anywhere is injudicious in the extreme. Certainly it is inconsistent with all notions of etiquette for him to make such a proposition—unless, indeed, he occupy the position of a romantic deliverer from some imminent peril.

G. S. W.—The verses can only be tolerated upon the supposition that the object for which they were written is expected to cover their defects. These are so many that an unusually large cloak requisite for the purpose. The grotesqueness of charitable devotees afflicts simple-minded people with a nightmare of horrible proportions. We must secure our readers against this visitation.

A. C.—The difference between the signification of the two words is very wide. Cancer is applied to a glandular disease by which the human frame is often afflicted; cancer, on the other hand, is a disease incident to trees which causes the bark to rot and fall. We cannot agree with you that this is a distinction without a difference. While cankerworm has a literal meaning, it is also often used as a figurative expression to denote some blighting sorrow or some bitter remorse.

LOUISE H.—You should consult a coiffeur about the curls, who will very likely give you a wrinkle about the other matter. If your neighbourhood does not produce such an artist, then roll the hair up in papers as our grandmothers used to do and apply the fire-tongs, only moderately heated lest you singe and destroy. For paleness, first anoint with cold cream, and over it sprinkle some rice powder, which will thus adhere and produce the desired effect.

MARK S.—A large head and small hands are not favourable signs in a youth who expects to become a champion swimmer. They do not, however, present insuperable difficulties. In reply to your other question, it may be said that a man who had lost one of his arms might be able to swim a long way; but if an individual had lost a leg, he could do little more than float, rowing with his

arms, for a short distance. In a match, therefore, the one-arm swimmer would beat the one-leg swimmer.

MANGOLD.—To make mangel-wurzel wine: The fruit must be pared, cut into slices, and well pressed in a cider press, or in a wooden tub under heavy weights; to every gallon of juice thus obtained add two pounds of lump sugar and a pint of brandy; let this liquid work in an open cask, when it has finished working bung the cask; at the end of three months draw off into another cask; in a few days after, bottle off, adding a gill of distilled water as each bottle is filled. Let the bottles be well corked.

FLORENCE.—The writing is good enough for the purpose. There is one awkward orthographical mistake which might prejudice you, supposing your application contained a similar error. In business letters even slips of the pen should be avoided. 2. The growth of the hair is promoted by occasional washing and clipping, and by exercise to ensure a free action of the skin. Pray leave off the constant use of the acids. They will, indeed, reduce your bulk, but at the same time they will ruin your health.

A. J. K.—As far as our experience goes, a poet and a partisan of monastic life are incongruous. We are not so well acquainted as we should be with the literary productions of Abeldar and Holoise, but we believe that even they never attempted poetry. You are certainly to be envied, as is every contented man. You have found "the loved home of your dream," and you won't leave it, not you, for the nicest girl in England. The home you say is "dearer to my heart than all the world beside." Exactly so. Then give up writing poetry. The insertion of your attempt is impossible—albeit that a poet willfully and resolutely innocent of love is indeed a phenomenon!

REAPING AND SOWING.

Think not the thistle-seed to cast,
And reap the rose, full-blown;
Men needs must gather, first or last,
The harvest they have sown.
Who guine a heart must give a heart—
Like is to like allied—
And no device nor cunning art
Can turn the doomsday.

A. C.

W. R., dark, and domesticated. Respondent must be able to keep a wife comfortably.

A. D., a young lady, seventeen, fair, and loving. Respondent must be tall, dark, and in good circumstances.

L. B., twenty-five, dark, confiding, and domesticated. Respondent should be a clerk or tradesman, comfortably situated.

G. E., thirty-six, fair, good tempered, and a good housewife. Respondent must be dark, and in business for himself.

ELIZA, twenty-two, 5ft. 7in., fair, good tempered, and fond of home. Respondent must be about the same age, with an income sufficient to keep a wife comfortably.

SARAH, tall, good looking, genteel, and amiable. Respondent should be dark, a widower, and possess a good income.

CAPTAIN S., 5ft. 7in., black hair, eyes, and whiskers. good looking, and plays the concertina. Respondent must be young, good looking, and educated.

GOODY-TWO SHOES, twenty-five, short, dark hair, gray eyes, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be about the same age, loving, steady, tall, and dark.

J. A. M., twenty-one, tall, dark hair and eyes, good looking, and loving. Respondent must be dark, fond of home, in good circumstances, and not over twenty-four.

KATE and MARIE, two Jewish young ladies, aged seventeen, both blondes; will have a small fortune on their wedding-day. Respondents must be of the Jewish persuasion, and about twenty-two.

GRACE, short, dark brown hair and eyes, accomplished, domesticated, and well connected. Respondent must be a gentleman-farmer, with a good income, tall, good looking, and affectionate.

ANNIE C., nineteen, nice looking, petite, lively, domesticated, and possessed of a few hundred pounds. Respondent must be about thirty, business-like; or the captain of a vessel.

LOVING WILLIE, twenty-six, 5ft. 5in., dark, of temperate habits, highly respectable family, and a good tradesman. Respondent must be about the same age, good looking, domesticated, and possessed of money.

LUCY F., seventeen, fair, dark blue eyes, rather below the medium height; will have 400l. on her wedding-day. Would like to correspond with a young tradesman, tall, dark, and fond of home.

HARRY LOG LINE, nineteen, 5ft. 5in., a sailor, fair complexion, curly hair, blue eyes, can sing and dance, and is good tempered. Respondent must be tall and good looking.

GIPSY GIRL, twenty, tall, a real brunette, wishes to meet with a gentleman from twenty-five to thirty, tall, prepossessing, respectable appearance, fond of retirement and home.

SWEET BEIRIA, twenty-one, average height, light complexion, stylish, and engaging, would like to meet with a young gentleman, tall, dark, fond of music, home, and family, aged from twenty-four to twenty-eight.

STARLIGHT BESS, twenty-four, middle height, dark hair and eyes, fair complexion, loving, and fond of home. Respondent must be about twenty-eight, tall, dark, loving, steady, and able to keep a wife.

JACK, from Canton, twenty-two, 5ft. 7in., dark complexion, good looking, and in the Navy. Respondent must be from nineteen to twenty-one, cheerful, loving, and fond of home.

LADY OF THE LARKS, nineteen, pretty, dark, bright dark eyes, affectionate, cheerful, and fond of music. Respondent must be tall, fair, in a good position, and fond of home.

MOSS ROSE and ORANGE BLOSSOM (two sisters of good birth and education).—"MOSS ROSE," eighteen, tall, dark,

brown eyes, and handsome. "Orange Blossom," medium height, fair, blue eyes, pretty, and loving. Respondents must be dark, not in trade, of good parentage, and able to keep a wife.

OPHELIA, seventeen, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, good temper, domesticated, loving, and cheerful. Respondent must be about nineteen, tall, dark, good looking, fond of dancing and music, and affectionate.

THREE CRUMS.—"Anchor Jack," twenty-two, 5ft. 10in., fair, and good looking. "J. B.," twenty-four, 5ft. 10in., fair, blue eyes, whiskers, and moustache. "Obadiah Bluenose," twenty-six, 5ft. 8in., dark, with hazel eyes. Respondents must be loving, domesticated, and fond of a sailor.

FANNIE, eighteen, tall, fair, good looking, cheerful, loving, domesticated, fond of music, and good tempered. Respondent must be about twenty-two, fond of home, educated, and have money; a gentleman of the Jewish persuasion preferred.

CLARA, LIZZIE, and ANNIE (sisters), wish for husbands, who should be tall, dark, and tradesmen.—"Clara," twenty-one, black hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, tall, loving, and handsome. "Lizzie," nineteen, tall, graceful, brown hair, blue eyes, and very fair complexion. "Annie," eighteen, petite, large blue eyes, and of a loving disposition. Will all have money on their marriage-day.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

PERCY is responded to by—"Wildflower," fair complexion, brown hair and eyes, good tempered and fond of home.

MARY by—"Walter," a clerk in a good situation, good looking, fair, medium height, and twenty-one.

E. C. M. by—"Rosa," short, large brown eyes, and dark curly hair.

J. W. R. by—"Woodbine," tall, fair, brown hair and eyes, and a nice figure.

JULIA by—"A. H.," thirty-one, and in business for himself; would like to exchange cars.

JENNIE B. by—"Frank T.," twenty-four, good looking, with a good income.

WILLIAM by—"S. C.," twenty, dark, good looking, affectionate, and fond of home.

A. C. W. by—"Gertrude O.," medium height fair and affectionate.

J. E. Y. by—"A. Mermaid," tall, handsome, young, amiable, and domesticated; and—"Merric Lizzie," 5ft. 4in., fair, brown hair, and blue eyes.

J. by—"Sylvia," tall, and fair; and—"Emily," nineteen, medium height, golden hair, blue eyes, pretty, affectionate, domesticated, and has expectations.

WILLIAM (in the Navy) by—"Wild Rose," tall, fair, good looking, and fond of home; and—"Agnes," twenty-two, and anxious to be married.

MARGUERITE G. by—"W. T." (seaman, R.N.), 5ft. 8in., manly bearing, a good musician, and one that will for ever stand by his craft. M. G.

THOMAS and WILLIAM by—"Jessie and Isabella," Jessie, twenty, 5ft. fair, dark brown hair, gray eyes, fond of home, and loving. Isabella, eighteen, dark hair and eyes, cheerful, fond of home, and loving.

T. J. S. and G. S. by two friends—"Kata," tall, dark hair and eyes, cheerful, and loving; would like to hear from T. J. S. Fannie, fair, light brown hair, blue eyes, fond of music; would like to hear from G. S.

THOMAS and WILLIAM by—"Blue-Eyed Nellie" and "Dark-Eyed Lucy." Nellie, eighteen, tall, fair, good looking, good tempered, domesticated, fond of home, and loves a sailor. Lucy, nineteen, tall, dark, good tempered, domesticated, fond of home, and loves a sailor.

J. W. R. by—"Maid of Kent," tall, fair, domesticated, fond of home, and a lass that loves a sailor;—"Ermenegarde," seventeen, tall, handsome, amiable, and loves a sailor; and—"Marion," twenty, dark hair and eyes, good tempered, fond of home, and dearly loves a sailor.

G. S. by—"Christine," twenty-two, 5ft. 5in., fair, can sing and play very nicely, would make a loving wife, can sew, and is a lively lass, but is not fond of the sea; and—"S. B.," twenty-one, medium height, dark, ladylike, affectionate, fond of travelling, and would endeavour to make him happy.

WATER LILY by—"Flavius," twenty-two, medium height, dark, fond of home, and able to keep a wife;—"Frieda of the Seas," 5ft. 5in., dark complexion, gray eyes, light hair, good tempered, fond of singing, and in the Navy; and—"G. W.," twenty-one, 5ft. 7in., dark, good looking, and has an income of 350l. a year.

D. V. C. by—"Florence," tall, loving, and accomplished, with every capability of making a good wife;—"Laughing Emmy," a healthy, pretty, ladylike little blonde of seventeen, with golden hair, expressive blue eyes, good teeth, regular features, a good figure, and can play the piano;—"F. A.," eighteen, medium height, light auburn hair, violet eyes, accomplished and handsome; and—"C. F.," who possesses the qualifications desired, and wishes to receive his carte.

SEA NYMPH's wishes have been complied with.

J. H.—There is some mistake in your communication.

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NOTICE.—Part 52, for JANUARY, Now Ready, price 7d., containing Steel Plate Engraving, coloured by hand, of the latest Fashions, with large Supplement Sheet of the Fashions for January.

N.B.—CORRESPONDENTS MUST ADDRESS THEIR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF "THE LONDON READER," 354, Strand, W.C.

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BASKET FOR ORNAMENTS. MAT, &c., &c.

BASKET FOR ORNAMENTS.—Nos. 1, 2, & 4.
This elegant crystal fancy-work basket is composed of wire and crystal beads on red silk.

The basket, formed of imitation leaves, rests on a kind of tripod. It is ornamented with a little cover



MANNER OF WORKING LEAF OF BASKET.—No. 1.

of white sarcenet. First of all bend three equal pieces of steel wire as represented in the illustration. The thickness of the wire should depend on the size desired for the basket. Surround the wire with red wool, and the feet of the tripod with crystal beads of equal size, having first passed red silk through these beads.

For single beads, bind the wire according to the illustration, and stitch a row of beads down the centre of the leaf. This has the effect of veins. Then begin at the upper end and work the leaf backwards and forwards according to illustration No. 1. After the completion of the leaves, sew them underneath with red silk to covered rounds of cardboard, and fasten them according to illustration to the upper ring of the tripod.

MAT.—No. 3.

The centre of this mat is made of two different coloured ribbons, done in the same way as the tape work. The centre would look pretty in green and white, and the quilling of ribbon for border in green. Those who understand tape work will be able to work it from illustration.

SQUARE NETTING.

We will endeavour to explain the manner of doing the square netting for long or short curtains.

Set up as many stitches as you may require for the "width" of your curtain, if a long one, or for the "depth" if a short one, taken diagonally across (20 stitches on a mesh the size of a common cedar pencil will be about equal to 12 inches); but it must be recollected that measuring in this way the real width will be about a third less. Then decrease at the end of every row by netting 2 together till you bring it to 1 stitch. Then commence again, netting on your 1st row, and increase by netting 2 stitches in one at the end of the rows on one side, and decrease by taking 2 together at the end on the other side till your curtain is long enough, measuring from the 1 stitch of the square end. Then begin to decrease at the end of every row till you bring it again to 1 stitch, and form a square end corresponding with the first. In short curtains what we have called the "length" of the curtain, from the 1 stitch at the square end, would be the "width" way of the window, but the working would be exactly the same.

FASHIONS.

BLACK cashmeres are much in vogue this season. They suit old and young ladies alike, a paletot and upper skirt of cashmere, or a polonaise, being worn over a black silk under-skirt. The paletot is slashed, the over-skirt is very long, and often four yards wide. Guipure lace, from the narrowest width to that wide enough to be called a flounce, edges the skirt. The new duchess lace is also used on cashmere, but is rather expensive, and scarcely heavy enough to trim a wool fabric. Fringe and passementerie, with or without jet, are the other appropriate trimmings. Young ladies put pretty little vests or waistcoats of quilted silk of a bright colour beneath black paletots, allowing the fronts of the wrap to fall open and disclose the vest. A black cashmere suit, a turban or gipsy of gros grain or velvet, with ostrich feathers, all black, plain linen collar and cuffs, a bright Mephistopheles red necktie, enamelled or plain gold jewellery of Oriental design, black kid boots, and long-wristed gloves, is a favourite suit for the pro-

menade. If the day is cold, a boa and muff of black marten are added.

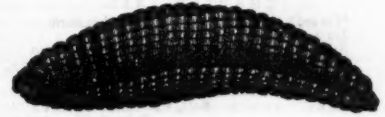
Cashmere and fine merino suits have the front width of the under-skirt laid in deep kilt pleats from the belt to the edge of the dress, and a border of kilt pleats around the skirt. The long tunic, open in front, conceals the plain part of the skirt, showing only the pleats, and thus gives the effect of a regular Scotch kilt. Rosettes are placed down the centre of the front width of such dresses, and it is probable that the fashion of trimming the front width will be revived. The fronts of tunics are often ornamented with a row of buttons on each side. Imported skirts have but one row of buttons, with holes to fasten the tunic.

An under-skirt of black silk is of more value this season than an over-skirt of black, as dresses of any colour are now draped over black silk skirts. This gives variety to the toilette, as several changes may be made with one or two costumes. In this way suits of last season having only a single skirt and basque are made stylish. The skirt, if trimmed to the waist in the fashion of last year, should have all the trimming removed except the flounce at the bottom. It is then bunched up at the back and sides, and serves for an over-skirt above a black silk skirt of walking length. The corsage and sleeves now match the over-skirt instead of the under-skirt, as was lately the fashion. Sometimes a velvet bow or a rosette

hemmed at the edges and gathered an inch from the top. The basque is flannel-lined and worn over a plain corsage. Suits of dark brown cloth or cashmere are now trimmed with silk bands of lighter shade, giving a very pretty effect.

FASHIONS FOR OLD LADIES.

The soft twilled wool fabrics now in fashion have always been in favour with old ladies, and many of



LEAF OF BASKET.—No. 2.

the most refined styles of the day are especially appropriate for them. They add pointed basques to their plain round corsages, put the stately Marie Antoinette collar about the neck, deep cuffs on coat-sleeves, and permit the dress skirt to touch the floor behind. This is for general wear. For state occasions demi-trains and tunics are adopted by stylish old ladies, and they consider themselves privileged to abandon almost all trimming, or, if they choose, to use it in profusion. Black cashmere suits for grandmothers have the same elaborate lace and passementerie garniture as have those worn by their granddaughters just entering society.

A black gros grain dress with train, made lately for a lady sixty years of age, had a flounce of finest Chantilly lace over tulle surrounding the skirt. The tunic was formed of a Chantilly shawl. The corsage, with pointed front and postillion basque, had the neck open very low, and filled in with white tulle and lace. A black velvet dress with court train and basque had velvet ruffles faced with rich faille and headed by ostrich feather bands. This was worn by an old lady of fine height, with soft, silvery gray hair arranged in the Pompadour style. The front was drawn back from the forehead and temples over a thick roll, while at the back was a false chataigne of a single broad plait matching the beautiful gray of her natural hair. A cap or head-dress of any sort would have seemed superfluous on that fine head. Hair-dyes, false fronts, and caps, are used less and less every year. The former are never necessary or becoming, and deceive no one, while the latter are sometimes used for warmth by old ladies whose hair has grown too thin to support a switch of false hair. The front hair is then arranged in small puffs or in short curls, and the head is covered with a plain cap of blond made in a simple, pretty fashion, with a gathered crown and short-eared front piece. Ruches of footing, of tulle, or folds of blond with tiny piping at one edge, are the trimming.

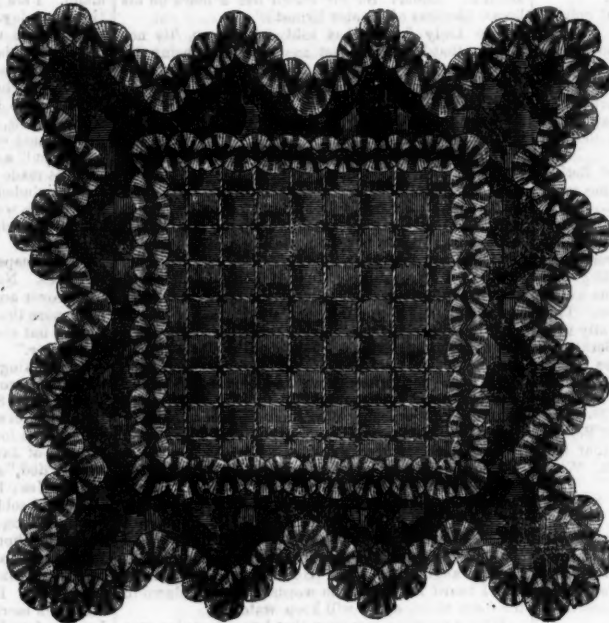
VARIETIES.

ONE of the pretty caprices of the season is to fold a width of black net, plain or dotted, in loose folds around the neck, just as tissue veils were worn last spring. The net is soft and becoming, and will be used until cold weather compels the constant use of furs.

A novelty for securing a veil on a hat or bonnet is a flexible steel spring wound with silk of the colour of the veil, which is passed through the hem of the veil and adjusted to the size of the bonnet. This ingenious device is well adapted to travelling veils, which are so frequently blown away and lost.

THE Lord Mayor of London, in a final interview with the Cannon Street committee, has declined to grant the use of the Guildhall for a meeting to urge upon the Government the expediency of taking steps to ensure peace between Prussia and France. The deputation loudly hissed the chief magistrate on withdrawing from his presence, and afterwards passed a vote of censure upon him.

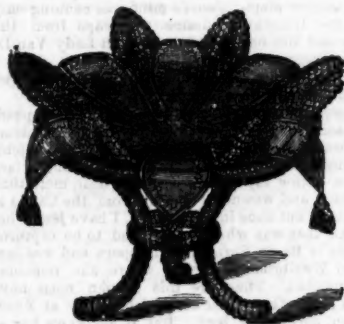
THE following is Garibaldi's reply to the offer of a sword of honour:—"Autun, Dec. 18. My dear Chevasus,—I consider a sword given by France as the most glorious of gifts, and you will certainly be astonished that I do not accept it. Having closed the door against all decorations for the braves who accompany me, I can admit no preference. At the



MAT.—No. 3.

with ends is placed half-way down the sides of the upper-skirt, as if to hold back the drapery securely. Besides this there is seldom any set trimming above the border of over-skirts.

One of the prettiest costumes lately made is an in-



FANCY BASKET OF BEADS.

visible green cloth polonaise-casque with postillion basque. The trimming is two flat folds of the cloth piped at the upper edge with a narrow fold of black velvet. The under-skirt is black silk with two narrow pleated flounces and a puffed heading. Another of plum-coloured cashmere has a basque and two skirts trimmed with narrow bias gros grain ruffles,

close of the war I will accept with them whatever Republican France chooses to award. Not before. My gratitude to the generous initiators of an idea flattering for me and for you. Yours, G. GABRIELDI.

THE DIAMOND MERCHANT.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Tis said that prisoned spirits in this cave
Do congregate and wail their liberty,
Spending their wretched hours in curses dire
On Merlin, whose strong arts confine them here,
Yet was the sound we heard more like the cry
Of tortured flesh than of a captive fiend.
So will we search. Soft, what have we here?"

Bulwer's King Arthur.

"THE shrieks of tortured spirits!" exclaimed the timid Janet as she heard Fritz's cry and its many echoes. "The cavern is full of them!"

Falling upon her knees, the trembling girl began to mutter incoherent petitions to her patron saint.

"It is the cry of a man in great peril!" thought Bethla.

Sada heard not the cry, or it fell upon her ears unheeded. With a dreamy, vacant stare she continued to gaze at the crackling flames on the hearth.

"Come, Janet," said Bethla, as she snatched up a lamp. "Let us go and see what this means."

"Oh, I dare not. The cavern is full of spirits, ghosts, and water-demons."

"There are no such things, Janet. But if you will not come I will go alone," replied the bold Bethla, with a step towards the curtained doorway.

"Heaven, save me! I dare not remain here alone with a mad woman, even if she is bound!" exclaimed Janet, springing to her feet and clinging to Bethla's robe.

"What a great coward you are!" sneered Bethla as she raised the tapestry and passed from the room into the hall, or the passage called the hall. "The cry was that of a man in distress. Come."

She moved on boldly, holding the lamp above her head, and Janet followed in great fear and trembling.

The passage descended gradually, winding and increasing in width until it opened upon the sandy and pebbly floor of the great cavern below. This cavern was far too large and lofty to be wholly illuminated by the rays of the lamp borne by Bethla, so that she searched about for several minutes before Janet cried out:

"Oh, there is a man lying on the sand! A dead man! a dead man! Mercy! let us go back!"

"If he is dead can he hurt us?" replied Bethla, advancing towards the motionless object that had appalled Janet. "Let us see if we know him. Why, it is Sir Fritz!"

"Yes—and dead!" said Janet. "Oh, what a dreadful place this is!"

"He is not dead," said Bethla as she stooped over the unconscious Rider chief. "He has swooned from exhaustion and loss of blood. He has just come from some affray, Janet. I must take off his armour to stanch this wound in his side. Here—do have some life in you, Janet, and aid me."

"Mercy! I know nothing of taking of armour!"

"But you can do as I direct," replied Bethla. "I have done such things many a time. When we have his armour off we can lift him to the bed there—"

"My lady's bed?"

"My lady is in her chair, and likely to be there for a long time, if she keeps mad," said the active Bethla as her strong and experienced hands stripped the armour from the unconscious Sir Fritz. "Many is the gay knight or man-at-arms, Janet, whose armour I have stripped from him, as he lay dead or sorely wounded, after a day of battle. I have followed the camps in my time, Janet, and sold many a suit of armour taken from the dead. I've seen women, too, finish the work begun by the sword or spear—finish it with a knife thrust—when he from whom they were stripping the armour tried to resist. But that deed I never did."

"Oh, Heaven! I hope you did not!" said the shuddering Janet.

"No; but I have seen women of the camps do it often. There—we have all his armour off. See—'tis this splinter of a lance that has kept this wound bleeding. There—I have drawn it out!"

"Ah! how he shuddered and groaned then!"

"A very good sign, Janet, that he is far from being dead. I wonder my lady there takes no note of what is going on. So—I have closed the wound, and it will bleed no more. Now aid me to place him upon the bed. I'd care little whether he lives or dies, save that I have taken a fancy to him, and he may set me free, if only because of gratitude."

Sir Fritz being placed upon the bed, seemed to sink

into a profound slumber, and Bethla, perceiving this, said to Janet:

"Did you notice on the breast of Sir Fritz a scar?"

"Yes—a scar like that of a burn. I noticed, too, that you regarded it narrowly."

"Did not the shape of the scar strike you? Go look, for only the blanket is over the breast."

With timid hands and fearful eyes, Janet obeyed, replaced the covering, and, returning to Bethla, whispered:

"It has a shape—it is very strange—much like a human hand."

"In the same part of the breast where Master Ernest bears his birth-mark."

"Yes—but this upon the bosom of Sir Fritz is not a birth-mark, Bethla. It is the scar of a burn, as if a hot iron had been pressed there—a hot iron shaped like a human hand."

"So it was, no doubt," replied Bethla. "But only the hand of nature can produce 'Baron Hermann's Seal.'"

"What?"

"That which I have heard called 'Baron Hermann's Seal.' Why, you heard my lady speak of it but now, did you not?" asked Bethla, with a keen gaze into her simple companion's face.

"I remember now; she did use the words, 'Baron Hermann's Seal,' and something about the Altenburgs, the princes of Zurichbold—"

"Yes, yes—she was raving. So think no more about it. Ahem! So Sir Edred has a mark on his breast like that of Master Ernest?"

"So Lady Louise has told me. If so, 'tis not strange that Master Ernest has the same, being Sir Edred's son."

"Ho!" thought Bethla, "I can understand very well why Master Ernest has the mark, but it is a mystery to me why Sir Edred has it. Now I know that Ernest is not Sir Edred's son. The diamond merchant, I have heard, is the son of old Joam Van De Veer, who languishes in the land of the infidel, if he be alive."

Glancing at her companion, Bethla saw that Janet was regarding her very attentively, and she feared lest she had spoken her thoughts aloud.

"Did I say anything, Janet?"

"No. I was thinking that if Lady Louise had known you were once a spoiler of the dead, she never would have taken you into her service. Nor would she have done so had you not told her so piteous a tale of your misfortunes a few months ago at Sparburg."

"It does not matter now, Janet, since I am no longer in her service, and not likely ever to be again, as affairs now appear. Was I not faithful to her and honest while I served her, up to the hour when yonder Rider captured us?"

"Oh, I doubt not that. But of this scar on the breast of Sir Fritz, and the mark you call 'Baron Hermann's Seal,' let us speak of that."

"As my lady there is quiet, and we know not when she may cease to be so, let us sleep," replied Bethla. "As for the scar, I know nothing about it—nor aught of 'Baron Hermann's Seal,' except that I heard her speak the words. Now lie down in the room there, and I will keep watch."

With a growing suspicion that her companion was not telling the truth, Janet replied:

"I am not sleepy."

"Oh, then, if you keep awake, and my lady there begins to rave, you may wish you slept."

So saying, Bethla tossed a pillow upon the floor, and seemed to fall asleep. Janet also placed a pillow upon the floor, laid down and closed her eyes.

But neither slept. Janet's mind was running only upon one thought, a desire to escape from the cavern and the forest, and to be with Lady Van De Veer in Prague.

Bethla, having stumbled upon a mystery, let her thoughts roam in this fashion:

"I wonder who this mad woman is? It appears she is somebody that once knew my mother. Zuleme Richt was my mother's name, and I am Lena Richt, her daughter. So this woman saw my mother's face in mine. Now my mother has been dead more than ten years, and was never absent from the Castle of Zurichbold but once in all her life, I have heard her say, and that was when she chanced to be captured by some of Baron Hermann's troopers, and was carried to Zweibrudren Castle, where she remained some months. Therefore this woman must have known my mother either at Zurichbold or at Zweibrudren, perhaps at both. But if she knew her at Zurichbold, it was before my day. So it must have been at Zweibrudren that my mother told this woman she had a daughter named Lena. Now, who is she? What is her name? She has heard, too, that a nurse of the house of Altenburg, one Lena Richt, disappeared with young Prince Egbert, infant son of Prince Eustace. She could not have heard that from my mother, for my mother was dead when

I fled with the infant prince. There has been an attempt made by some one to imitate, upon the breast of this Rider chief, the birth-mark of the Altenburgs, who are descended from Princess Velina, the wife of Prince Egbert the Bold. Why? Could it have been for any other reason than to attempt to palm off this Rider, Sir Fritz, as one of the princely house?"

"Two heirs of the great house are missing. I can account for the disappearance of one, young Prince Egbert—the boy Ernest, in truth. Sir Fritz is fully thirty-five; so it was not to be used to put him in the place of Ernest that, in the attempt to produce the family birth-mark, the scar was made. Sir Fritz is about the same age that Prince Egbert Richard—Prince Richard he was called—should be if he is living. Now that must be about the age of Sir Edred; and Janet says Lady Louise has told her the diamond merchant bears the birth-mark which only the descendants of Lady Velina of Zurichbold can bear—the red hand of a man—like that on the bosom of Prince Eustace and Master Ernest his son. Sir Edred, then, may be the lost Prince Richard. But who is this woman who in her wildness called herself Baroness of Zweibrudren? If I knew her name I might have a guide. Sir Edred wonderfully resembles Prince Eustace; and still more does he resemble the father of Prince Eustace, Egbert the Bold. There is much in the face of Sir Fritz that reminds me of Baron Senlis, the son of Baron Hermann. I am very sure I never saw this woman until the other day. If she ever lived at Zurichbold, it was before I was born, or when I was very young."

"He promised to make me Baroness of Zweibrudren!" here suddenly burst from the lips of the woman in the chair.

"Ha! she begins again!" thought Bethla, rising on her elbow, and glancing at Janet.

But Janet was asleep, or feigned to be.

"Janet!" said Bethla, in a full tone. "Janet!"

Janet made no reply, nor did her eyes open. The simple-minded girl had sagacity enough to believe that Bethla would rather she were asleep than awake, and so, though wide awake, she feigned the deepest slumber.

"She sleeps!" thought Bethla. "And I am glad she does. Not that I fear her wits may enable her to discover and share a secret with me, but she might hear more than I desire. There, my lady is speaking again; but she speaks in a low voice now. I must get nearer."

So thinking, Bethla stationed herself immediately behind the woman's chair.

For a time Sada's mutterings were unintelligible to Bethla. But at length they were framed into words, spoken in a low tone, but loud enough even to reach the ears of Janet.

"He lied," said Sada. "He said the marriage was false. Yes; he said so after I had carried off the child and sold it. I told him I had strangled the young prince, and hurled the body into the river. He said I should have given the child to him. But I could not do that. I knew Baron Hermann would kill it, and send the corpse to Prince Egbert the Bold, in derision. I loved the babe. Alas! I loved Baron Hermann more. I thought I was his wife. He said I was before I stole the child, young Prince Richard. But because I did not give the baron the babe he struck me. He cast me into the dungeon at Zweibrudren. There was born my child—the child of Baron Hermann—Fritz."

"Ho!" thought Bethla, with a glance at the bed on which the Rider chief lay in profound sleep. "So you are of noble blood! you are a son of Baron Hermann. This woman, I know now, was Sada Probestar, for my mother often told me it was a woman named Sada Probestar who disappeared with the infant Prince Richard."

"In my dungeon I went mad," muttered Sada, staring at the fire. "There I learned to hate the baron. They say while I was mad I was forced to marry a thief—But who hears me?" she added, in a shrill voice becoming suddenly fierce, and glaring around. "Who is here? Who tled me?"

"I, my lady, at your command," said Bethla, in her soft voice, and at the same moment flashing a glance towards Sir Fritz, then towards Janet.

But neither of them moved. One continued to feign slumber, the other was asleep.

"Ha! You, Zuleme Richt! You dared tie my hands?" cried Sada, glaring at Bethla. "How dare you bind the hands of a kinswoman of the Altenburgs?"

"My lady, I am not Zuleme Richt. She has been dead more than ten years," said Bethla, knowing that she was imagined by the mad woman to be her, Bethla's mother.

"I am Sada Probestar, and you are Zuleme Richt. I am a kinswoman of the prince; I am the nurse of the infant prince. How dare you bind my hands? Wretch, I am bound to this chair. I am not Sada

Probestar. Who says I am? I am Baroness of Zweibrücken. Where is my son Fritz? Where am I? Good Heavens, I am mad! Ah, you are one of the women Sir Fritz left with me?"

"Yes, my lady. You are ill."

"Yes, I am ill. Do not heed anything I say," replied Sada, who then relapsed into silence again, and stared at the fire.

"So this is Sada Probestar," thought Bethia, who, having been born and reared at Zurichbold, knew well the story of her mysterious disappearance from the castle thirty-five years before, with the infant Prince Richard, the first-born son of Egbert the Bold. "All at Zurichbold believed she was dead—believed she was captured and killed by Baron Hermann, and the infant prince with her! So she lives; and now I know she was bribed by the baron to steal the child. But she says she did not kill the child, but sold it. Then the child may be now alive, a man grown. To whom did she sell the child? I must discover that. Her fit is not fully upon her yet, for she showed a glimmer of sense just now. She bade me heed nothing that she might say."

"I have a secret to tell to Baron Senla, or to Prince Eustace—to him who might offer the greatest reward: the secret that the child I fled with from Zurichbold is alive; is called Ernest; is supposed to be the son of the diamond merchant, Sir Edred Van De Veer. My faith! could I prove this last, the diamond merchant would surely reward me immensely. If I make him Prince of Zurichbold, he should fill my apron with diamonds, and wed me to one of the young nobles who pay tribute to the Grand-Duchy of Zurichbold."

"Again, having the secret in my hands, what reward may I not gain from Prince Eustace for my silence? Surely he would not desire to give up the grand-duchy to one whom he has never seen—nor to any one. Then what a gem of a secret to sell to the fierce old Baron of Zeibrudden! My faith! my fortune is sure in any event, if I can escape from this vile cavern. That reminds me to attend to Sir Fritz, for it is through his aid, or by his life, that I may chance to escape to some secure place where I may safely sell these secrets."

These thoughts and desires proved Bethia to be a very ambitious and unscrupulous woman, and in truth she was a person who cared very little for right or wrong, so long as she could bend either to her own interests.

(To be continued.)

FACETIE.

A YOUNG man, charged with being lazy, was asked if he took it from his father. "I think not," was the reply; "father's got all the laziness he ever had."

A BARRISTER blind of one eye, pleading with his spectacles on, said: "Gentlemen, in my argument I shall use nothing but what is necessary." "Then," whispered a wag, "take one of the glasses out of your spectacles."

A RICH man asked a poor person if he had any idea of the advantages arising from riches. "I believe they give a rogue an advantage over an honest man," was the answer.

A GENTLEMAN who has unfortunately broken his word, is anxious to procure some cement that will repair it. The same composition with which people mend their manners may possibly answer.

MR. JONES called upon a gentleman who advertises to restore oil-paintings, and requested him to restore a valuable landscape which was stolen from him two years ago.

EDUCATIONAL.—If Miss Garrett is at any future time elected to the Chair of the Education Board, her official position will be recognised by the title of "chairwoman" (as "charwoman" pronounced), in which capacity she will employ, let us hope, the newest brooms.—Punch.

DECEMBER THE TWENTY-SECOND.—Mrs. Malaprop is a very just person, and never favours any one unduly. She, therefore, did not approve of the eclipse being "partial," and thinks the astrologers ought to have known better than to have taken any notice of it.—Punch.

A TRAGIC TALE.—There was no doubt she did it. It could not be concealed. Traces of it were too evident. Indeed, she did not attempt to deny it. No one was by when it was done. Her mistress had only been speaking to her a few minutes before it happened. She was detected in the very act. A policeman was passing at the moment, and saw her through the area railings at the kitchen window. She was hardened enough to look up from what she was doing, and smile and nod to him. It came out that this was not the first time. And she declared she would repeat it. It was cleverly done. In a

very brief space of time all signs of it would have disappeared. Yes, there could be no doubt of it—the law must take its course—she had smothered—a rabbit in onions!—Punch.

PEOPLE WE HAVE NOT MET.

A hairdresser who can cut your hair without venturing to make any cutting observations on it.

A waiter at a city dinner whose white gloves are not big enough for either Gog or Magog.

A linendraper's shopman who will be content with selling a lady what she wants, and will not worry her to buy a dozen things she doesn't want.

A Shakespeare commentator who will abstain from twisting simple passages into thoroughly obscure ones.

An habitual criminal in the art of punning who will avoid using a word because he sees there is a joke in it.

A railway guard or porter of sufficient self-control to shut a carriage-door without violently banging it.—Punch.

MY HOLIDAY VISIT.

ALONG the road, by stage and steam,
I sped to hold my holiday.

My journey seemed a pleasant dream,
Which bore me from my toils away,

When winds did blow

The clouds into white dust of snow.

My thoughts were light and free of care,

And crystallised in lines like these,

Like snow-flakes waiting in the air,

When winds are harping on the trees,

And piping loud,

Calling cotillions from the cloud.

I halted at the cottage door,

Which opened wide with welcome swing,

And when I touched the sanded floor,

I felt the press of arms that fling

The pulsing blood

Into the cheeks a crimson flood.

The pressure of a soft, white hand,

A thrilling kiss from lips of rose,

The welcome of the household band,

From hearts as holy as the snows,

Made me at home,

Where household gods bless every room.

I'm seated at the window low,

Which looks out in the distance dim,

When the white curtain of the snow

Is lifted from its ermined brim.

The happy air

Is tossing leaves and snow-flakes there.

There the tall elms, disencumbered of leaves,

Raise their long branches brown and bare,

And the wind sighs like a heart that grieves,

Its limbs are like arms reached in prayer,

And yet they seem

Like Jacob's ladder in a quiet dream.

Oh, happy holiday to me!

Thou art a boon in season given;

In the light of loving eyes, I see

A picture of the love in Heaven,

When the true heart

Shall not be torn from friends apart.

G. W. R.

GEMS.

BE guarded in discourse, attentive, and slow to speak. Be not forward to assign reasons to those who have no right to ask.

SILENCE alone is a powerful weapon. An Arabic proverb says: "Silence is often an answer." Yes, and an eloquent one.

THE rose has its thorn, the diamond its speck, and the best man his failing.

A MAN without desire and without want is without invention and without reason.

WHERE gold and silver dwell in the heart, faith, hope, and love are out of doors.

SPARE that you may spend; fast that you may feast; labour that you may live; and run that you may rest.

EXPERIENCE teaches, it is true, but she never teaches in time. Each event brings its lesson, and the lesson is remembered; but the same event never occurs again.

COUNT MOLKE'S DAILY LIFE.—Count Molke remains as calm and impassive as ever. At a quarter to nine every morning General Podlebski and Colonel Von Werde wait upon him and receive his commands for the day. At ten the count attends on the King of Prussia, returning at twelve for lunch. He then drives out till four p.m., and works till six, dines and chats with friends till ten, at which time his suite

retire, leaving him to work till midnight. He then sleeps till half-past four, at which time he gets up and works till a quarter to nine. Such is the life of one of the greatest generals the world has ever seen.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

MANUFACTURE OF CHAMPAGNE.—As the greater part of the champagne country has been overrun by the German army and the exportation of genuine wine can hardly take place for some time to come, the artificial production of this beverage is likely to receive a new impulse. For those who prefer to manufacture their own champagne we append a number of approved recipes: Eight parts of the best West India sugar are to be dissolved in four quarts of distilled water, and boiled, then, while still hot, two quarts of rectified spirits added. This affords what is called champagne liquor to serve as stock in the manufacture. To prepare the Roderer brand with green seal and bronze cap, take one portion of the above liquor, one anker white wine, one bottle cognac, and four drops of the oil of wine beer dissolved in cognac. For Heidsieck, one portion liquor, one anker white wine, and half a quart cognac. Other varieties are prepared in a similar way, the chief difficulty being to provide the proper bottle, sealing-wax, and labels. In default of white wine, cider is found to answer every purpose, and glycerine can be substituted for sugar.

CHILBLAINS AND CHAPPED HANDS.—When chilblains manifest themselves, the best remedy not only for preventing them ulcerating, but overcoming the tingling, itching pain, and stimulating the circulation of the part to healthy action, is the liniment of belladonna, two drachms, the liniment of acetonie one drachm, carbolic acid, ten drops, to colloidion flexile, one ounce, painted with a camel-hair pencil over their surface. When the chilblains vesiculate, ulcerate, or slough, it is better to omit the acetonie, and apply the other components of the liniment without it. The colloidion flexile forms a coating or protecting film, which excludes the air, whilst the sedative liniments allay the irritation, generally of no trivial nature. For chapped hands we advise the free use of glycerine and good olive oil in the proportion of two parts of the former to four of the latter; after this has been well rubbed into the hands and allowed to remain for a little time, and the hands subsequently washed with Castile soap and tepid water, we recommend the belladonna and colloidion flexile to be painted, and the protective film allowed to permanently remain. These complaints not unfrequently invade persons of languid circulation and relaxed habit, who should be put on generous regimen and treated with ferruginous tonics. Obstinate cases are occasionally met with, which no local application will remedy, until some disordered state of the system is removed, or the general condition of the patient's health improved. Chapped lips are also benefited by the stimulating form of application we advocate, but the acetonie must not be allowed to get on the lips, or a disagreeable tingling results.

MISCELLANEOUS.

It is stated, apparently on good authority, that the Prussians have again prohibited the merchants of Champagne from sending their wine to Belgium for transmission thence to England or elsewhere.

A TELEGRAM from Seilly states that a letter-bag from Paris by balloon post has been picked up there. The letters were dated 29th November, and were saturated with water.

A MILITARY contemporary learns that the army estimates will not be laid before Parliament in any manner out of the ordinary routine, and that they will not be of any extraordinary character.

PRINCE WITTEGENSTEIN, the Russian military agent, and some other diplomatists who have been permitted to leave Paris, report that the city has enough bread, salt meat, and wine for two months' consumption.

MR. THOMAS EVANS, car proprietor, Birkenhead, established his claim for exemption from the payment of toll for his omnibuses travelling between Birkenhead and Holyoake, on account of their conveyance of Her Majesty's mails.

THE rough blocks of granite destined for the 16 monolithic pillars of the Hall of Victory, which is to be erected in the King's Square in commemoration of the present war, have arrived at Berlin from Sweden.

THE new law to grant certificates by the police to pedlars at a fee not exceeding 6d. in the United Kingdom took effect on the 1st of January. A pedlar is to trade in a district, and the police to exercise a supervision. A pedlar is to allow the police to open and inspect his pack, and for refusing, to be liable to a penalty of 20s.

Paris.

Allegro con Furia.

A DREAM OF THE PAST.

CARLE EMILE.

PIANO.

Moderato con espres.

p dolce.

Allegro Marziale.

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